



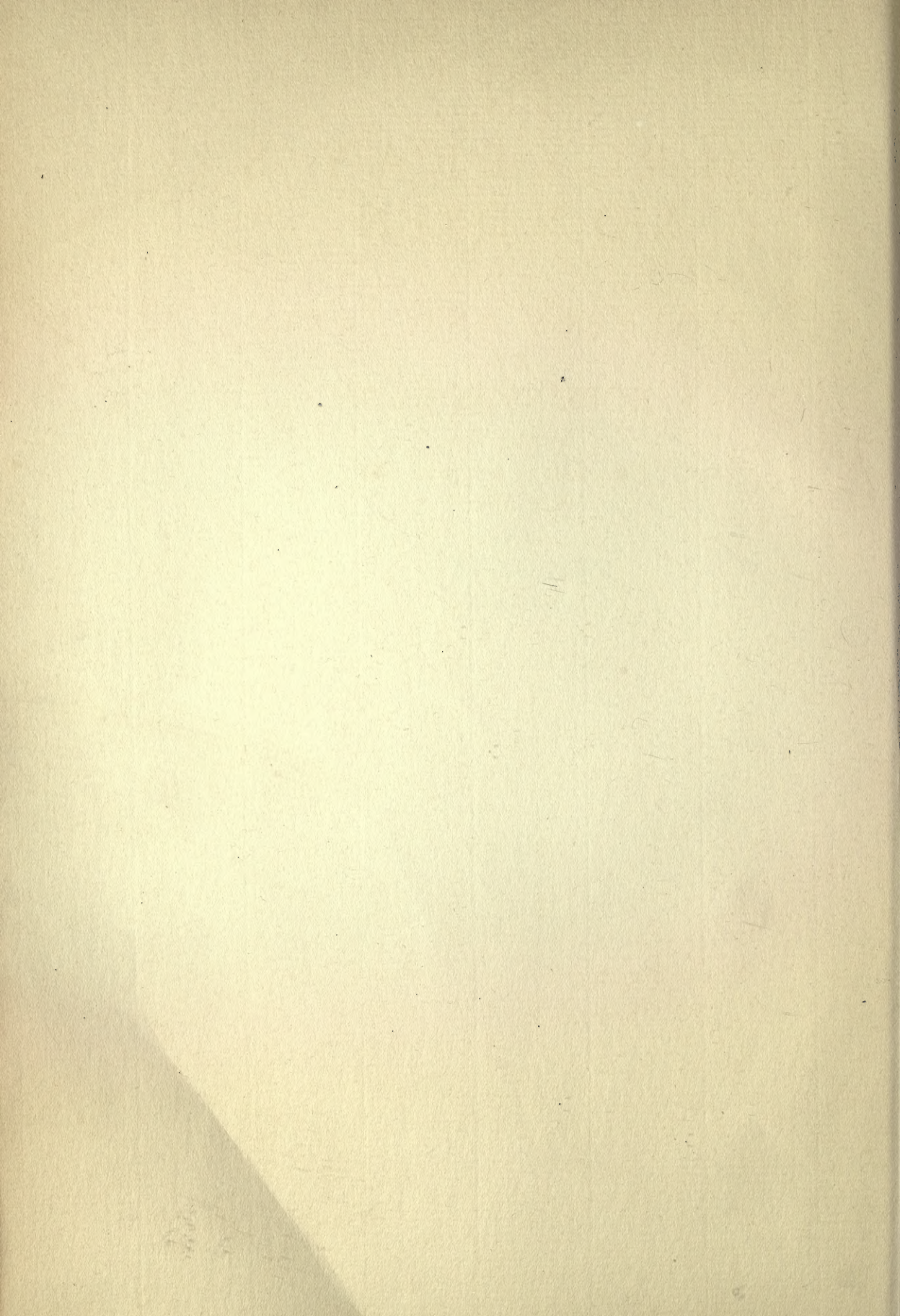


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IN
THACKERAY'S
LONDON



IN
THACKERAY'S
LONDON

PICTURES AND TEXT

BY

F. HOPKINSON SMITH

AUTHOR OF

*"Charcoals of New and Old
New York"*

GARDEN CITY

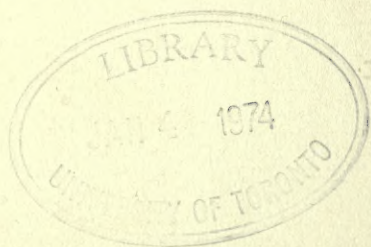
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FOREWORD

THE author begs to express his indebtedness to the several authorities who have made a close and intimate study of the life and work of the man whom we all love. Notably to my friends William H. Rideing, for his "Thackeray's London," and Lawrence Hutton, for his "Literary Landmarks of London." To Hare's "Walks in London," Taylor's "Historical Guide to London," Lucas's "A Wanderer in London," Merivale's "Thackeray," Theodore Taylor's "Thackeray, the Humorist and Man of Letters," Melville's "Thackeray's Country," and Anthony Trollope's "Life of Thackeray."

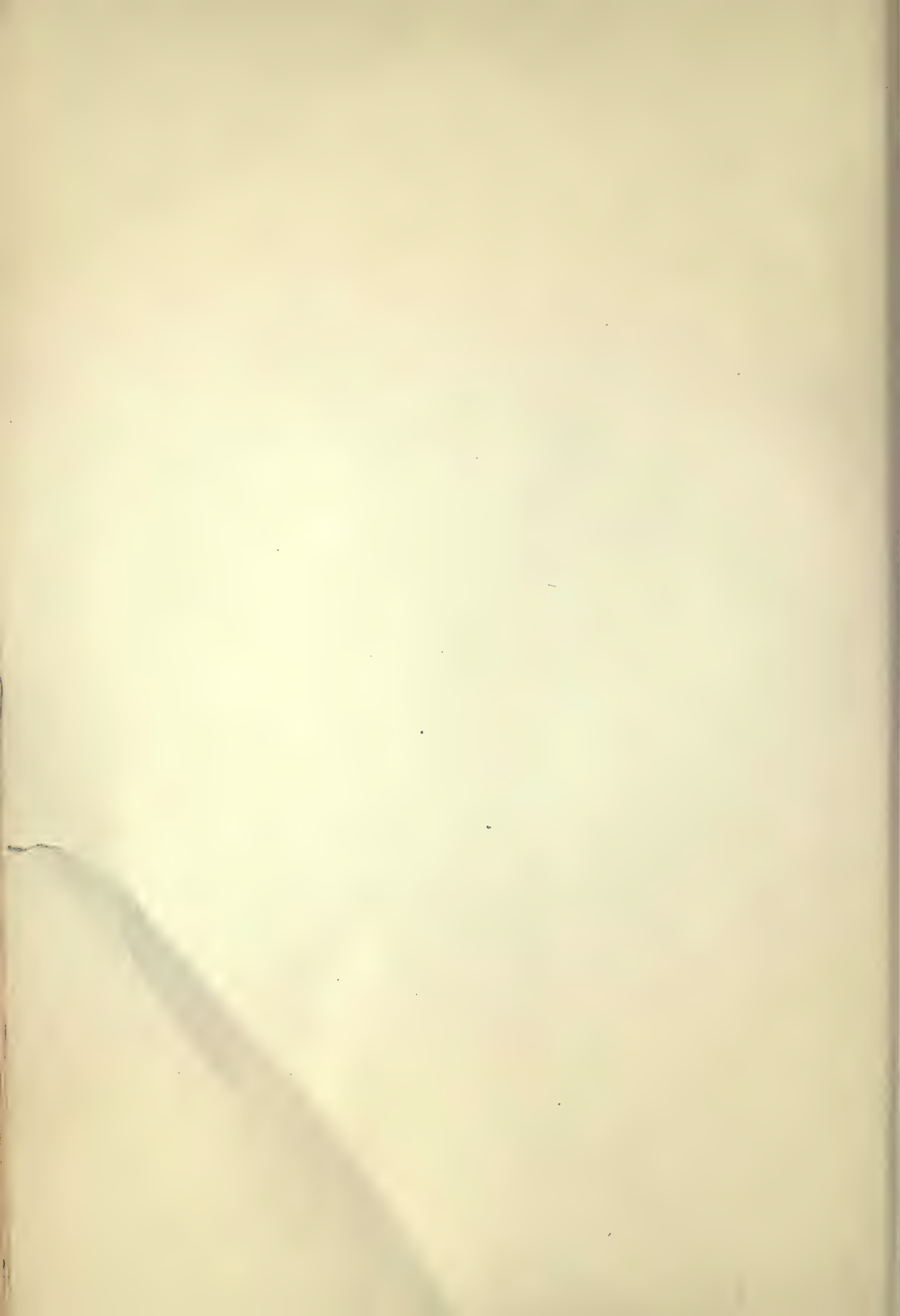
F. H. S.

New York, August, 1913.



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INTRODUCTION

THE first and only time I saw him was in Baltimore, when I was seventeen years old.

He and Mr. John P. Kennedy, a friend of my father, strolled one Saturday afternoon into the Mercantile Library where we boys were reading.

“Look!” came from a tangle of legs and arms bunched up in an adjoining easy chair. “That’s the Mr. Thackeray who is lecturing here.”

My glance followed a directing finger, and rested on a tall, rather ungraceful figure, topped by a massive head framed about by a fringe of whitish hair, short, fuzzy whiskers, crumpled collar and black stock. Out of a pink face peered two sharp inquiring eyes, these framed again by the dark rims of a pair of heavy spectacles, which, from my point of sight, became two distinct dots in the round of the same pink face. The portrait of Horace Greeley widely published during his Presidential campaign — the one all throat-whiskers and spectacles — has always recalled to my mind this flash glimpse of the great author whom I afterward learned to revere.

As I grew older and began to know him and his work the better, this early snapshot — caught upon one of the many

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millions of films stored away in some one of my brain cells — became the central figure about which were grouped a series of other portraits quite as real: Red-faced, rakish, shabby-looking Captain Costigan, with his hat cocked very much over one ear; Major Pendennis, that snob of snobs, scrupulously neat in his checked cravat, double gold eyeglasses, buff waistcoat and spotless linen, as he sat in his club opening his mail, or as he appeared with a yellow face, a bristly beard, and a wig out of curl after the dreary night spent in the mail-coach, when he went to save his scapegrace of a nephew from the clutches of the Fotheringay; Becky Sharp, in brilliant full toilette, her fingers and breast flashing with the jewels the Marquis of Steyne had given her, and the old scoundrel himself in silk stockings and knee-breeches, the ribbon of the Garter across his chest; Warrington, Clive, and the unspeakable Campaigner; and last, and best beloved of all, the pale, thoughtful face of dear Colonel Newcome, his black frock-coat, close-buttoned about his slim waistline.

Yes! I have seen and known them all, each and every one. I must admit that owing to the long lapse of years, and the absence of any such corroborative physiognomies as Mr. Greeley's, some of the negatives may be slightly blurred, but enough is left of the old films for me to distinguish the originals. More than that, I am willing to make oath that I have seen the Colonel himself in the flesh — not once, but dozens of times.

I will even maintain that he is still alive; for I called on him during my last visit to London, when these accompanying sketches were made. Though I failed, owing to

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unfortunate and unforeseen circumstances, to find him at home, he having "just stepped out," his associates, or successors, or whatever else you choose to call them, were within reach and showed me all over the place.

Unfortunately, too, Becky, Clive, and the others had "just stepped out" — an unaccountable thing to me, for they had had no notice of my coming. I had only conformed to the etiquette demanded abroad — that is, I had made the first call — and the rebuff, if you choose to consider it so, was therefore the more regrettable. And yet I was not affronted. I know that some day they *will* return my courtesy, every one of them, and the man with the fine head and pink face, whom I saw when a boy, will bring them. Whether to my lodgings, or my house, or my library, I cannot now say, but to some one of the places in which I happen to be; and they will keep on coming — no fear of that — as long as I can see to read.

That I should have headed my visiting list with the name of the Colonel can surprise nobody. I was at my hotel in Jermyn Street, at the time, with my friend Jules, and as London is a big place, and the people I wanted to see were scattered from the Tower to Smithfield, to say nothing of Kensington and the neighbourhood round about, walking was out of the question.

"Call a taxi, porter," I said.

He called it. That is, he stepped out, bareheaded, on the narrow sidewalk, blew a whistle which sounded like a policeman summoning aid, and up dashed a green and yellow comfort, the match of which does not exist the world over — and there are thousands just like it in London.

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I saw at a glance that the make-up and proportions of the machine were all right, for the back hood, when loosened, sank low enough for me to see my subject over its edge (an essential for me, who paint with my back to the driver, my easel and charcoals on the cushion of the main seat).

The chauffeur was all right too — no question about that; a well-built, broad-shouldered man of forty, with clean-cut features, straight nose, firm, straight mouth — a mere slit of a mouth — and a straight look out of his eyes. There was, moreover, no unnecessary shunting alongside the curb, no talking back — just a bend of his head in close attention, so as to miss no word, and an earnest, responsive glance.

“To Charter House, up Smithfield way,” I said, after the porter had stowed in my canvas, charcoal box, and easel.

“Yes, sir,” and he touched the edge of his hat brim with the tip end of his forefinger.

“Better go out through Holborn and the Market,” I added.

“Yes, sir” — the finger again at the brim. This time it was the knuckle that touched the edge, followed by a slight pause — the salute of a soldier to his superior officer.

“And slow down when you pass Staple Inn.”

“Yes, sir” — no touch now; the necessary courtesies and civilities having been accorded — and we were off.

CHAPTER I
GREY FRIARS
THE CHARTER HOUSE

CHAPTER I
GREY FRIARS
THE CHARTER HOUSE

AS WE whirled up Holborn, I caught now and then, through the side window of the taxi, glimpses of places I knew. At Staple Inn was the entrance gate where I had once painted in the rain, my feet on a plank to keep them off the soggy, water-soaked grass — the day the old porter had thawed me out before his soft-coal fire, and I had sent for something warmer, which we shared between us. Then I overlooked the Market, with its long line of big white wagons filled with the carcasses of the night's kill; and a little later plunged into the unknown, up a side alley, down the street of St. John, around a silent, deserted Square, hemmed about by an iron railing, the sad, melancholy trees standing like homeless tramps, the raindrops dripping from their broad, leaf-covered shoulders — nothing so depressing as a London park in a wet fog — and last, up a still narrower street until we stopped at the ancient gateway in Cistercian Square where lies the old Hospital of Grey Friars.

We had reached it at last — the very street that the Colonel had trod on his daily walks to the city, Pendennis

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and Clive sometimes beside him, their anguished hearts full of an unspoken tenderness. Ethel, too — brave, loyal Ethel, who had discovered the letter bequeathing her “dear, dear uncle” £500, had passed through this very gate eager to carry the news to the Colonel. Pendennis, on whose arm she entered, was a happy man that day.

“As we traversed the court the Poor Brothers were coming from dinner,” he says. “A couple of score, or more, of old gentlemen in black gowns issued from the door of their refectory and separated over the court, betaking themselves to their chambers. Ethel’s arm trembled under mine as she looked at one and another, expecting to behold her dear uncle’s familiar features. But he was not among the brethren. We went to his chamber, of which the door was open; a female attendant was arranging the room; she told us Colonel Newcome was out for the day, and thus our journey had been in vain.”

Neither did I find him at home. The same old porter listened attentively to my request, and, in reply, pointed to the house of the Head Master. He had grown younger, of course, in all the years, but he wore the same livery — the same coat for all I know. And the same old Head Master welcomed me, holding my card in his hand, looking at me over the top of his glasses — a brave, thoughtful man of seventy, perhaps, with a cheery, hearty manner, and one of those fresh English complexions that neither age nor climate affects. I forget what his name was in the Colonel’s time, but it is the Reverend Mr. Davies now.

He led me to a wide, open court, framed about by quaint buildings, and covered by clean gravel, over which strolled

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in twos and threes, some of the Poor Brothers whom Ethel had seen in their long, black gowns, most of them bareheaded, for it was June, and the sun had come out for a brief spell.

Here he paused.

"Before I show you Colonel Newcome's room" — he, too, I saw, had fallen into the habit of mixing his personalities — "I want you to see our great Hall — Guesten Hall. I have brought the keys, for this part of Charter House is not shown except in special cases." He fitted a great key into a massive lock, and pushed in the door, revealing a spacious panelled room, with high ceiling, huge fireplace, and carved screen shortening one end of its bigness. "Now, step a little closer and put your two feet on that plank. There, sir! That is the exact spot on which Mr. Thackeray once stood when he emptied his pocket of its shillings. I was away over by the fireplace, and I edged as close as I dared, but he didn't see me. What, sir, would you give to-day for a shilling that Colonel Newcome had given you? I was a Cistercian, you know, and whenever Mr. Thackeray came to visit us he always had his pocket full of shillings. When there was not enough he would borrow from anybody about him — once he had not a single sixpence left, and had to walk home.

"We always called him 'Colonel' whenever he came, just as they used to call Captain Thomas Light, who was really the original Colonel Newcome, after his namesake. Yes, you shall see the very room and go inside, if old Brother Bridger, who occupies it, will let you see it, for he, too, is a lover of Thackeray, and once he knows you want to make sketches you won't have a bit of trouble."

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The keys were jangling together again. This time one more modest was selected.

"Now, step in — isn't that a grand banquet hall? Here is where the Brothers take their meals, breakfast, dinner, and supper, and in this chair," and he pulled it out, "is where Mr. Thackeray stood the last time I saw him. He had come on Founders' Day to make a speech, and I can see him now as he pushed back his chair and stood facing the Brothers who stood up in his honour, and I can almost hear the tones of his voice; and that, my dear sir, was the last time I saw him alive, for he died within the year. And now, if you will excuse me, for it is one of my busy days, I'll show you the outside of the Colonel's rooms, and the doorway with the tablet bearing Mr. Thackeray's name, and the tablet bearing Captain Thomas Light's name. There! Stoop down and read it — the vines grow rather thick. And now, sketch away to your heart's content and make yourself quite at home, and if you get into trouble of any kind please come to me."

Thus it was that I opened my easel under the window of the very room which I had come three thousand miles to see; and, just here, I want to say to my readers that in attempting to convey to them something of the charm, and more particularly something of the reality, of these homes and haunts of Mr. Thackeray and his characters, I mean to rely more upon my illustrations than upon my text, avoiding, as best I can, unnecessary, and, perhaps, misleading descriptions.

That the sight of a man plumped down in the middle of the main path, the most of him on a three-legged stool, the



OUTSIDE VIEW OF COLONEL NEWCOME'S ROOMS



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whole of him working away like mad, his fingers smudged with charcoal, was not an everyday spectacle, became instantly apparent. Every Poor Brother, strolling aimlessly about, wheeled and bore down upon me.

"I'm an artist myself," offered an old fellow who must have been eighty (if he were a day). "That's a fine medium, that charcoal, if you don't try to do too much with it — we boys used to use it at the academy."

The others kept silent, watching me closely, and nodding their heads as I explained my methods of work.

"May I ask you where you come from?" whispered another pensioner, loosening his long black cloak as he stooped to get my answer — a retired naval officer I learned afterward.

"What! An American!" he cried, starting back. "Why, you don't talk like an American."

"Neither do you speak like a Welshman, nor a Scotchman, nor a London Cockney. We have as many dialects as you," I suggested in answer, my voice raised as I glanced toward the others, "and yet we are all Englishmen."

"Yes, all Englishmen; yes, that's true — all Englishmen," he kept repeating, as if the idea were entirely novel to him; and so the chatter went on, the crowd getting thicker all the time, the chapel service now being over, some remaining standing until my sketch was finished; others, the older and more tired or feeble, going into their rooms — they all lived in a row of small houses, each one with a window and a door opening on the court — for chairs and stools on which to rest.

I had, without my knowing it, been a godsend to a group

IN THACKERAY'S LONDON

of people who had heard each other's stories for the hundredth time, who knew every crook and twinge in each other's back and limbs, who had quarrelled and made up, and quarrelled again, and who were so set in their ways that many a subject was outlawed and strangled by common consent at the first utterance. Yet kindly gentlemen withal, attached to each other by the common bond of poverty and suffering, their fortunes wrecked, and they left stranded together on the barren coast of life.

Ethel could not bear to think of her dear uncle, in such a place, but the Colonel himself saw only the cheerful sides.

"‘I have found a home, Arthur,’ he said to Pendennis. ‘Don’t you remember, before I went to India, when we came to see the old Grey Friars, and visited Captain Scarsdale in his room? — a Poor Brother like me — an old Peninsular man. Scarsdale is gone now, sir, and is where “the wicked cease from troubling and the weary are at rest”; and I thought then, when we saw him — here would be a place for an old fellow when his career was over, to hang his sword up; to humble his soul, and to wait thankfully for the end, Arthur. My good friend, Lord H., who is a Cistercian like ourselves, and has just been appointed a governor, gave me his first nomination. Don’t be agitated, Arthur, my boy, I am very happy. I have good quarters, good food, good light, and fire, and good friends; blessed be God! . . . And if I wear a black gown, is not that uniform as good as another? and if we have to go to church every day, at which some of the Poor Brothers grumble, I think an old fellow can’t do better.’”

Three or four of them, when my work was finished and

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Evins had carried my traps to the taxi, shook hands with me in parting, and one old fellow walked with me as far as the gate, his long black Pensioner's cloak flapping about his unsteady legs; and yet he bore himself erect, and, as I noticed later on, with a certain distinction — that indescribable quality in a man which only comes with good birth, good breeding, and the consciousness of having done something worth while. When he had lifted his hat, and had begun to retrace his steps, I found myself standing where he had left me, my eyes following his every movement, until he disappeared in an angle of the court.

"Yes, sir," said the porter, in answer to my inquiring glance, "I don't wonder you want to know — you ain't the first has asked me. If you'd been sharp you might have got a look at the Victoria Cross he wears on his breast underneath his gown. There ain't many like him."

"Well, why is he here?" I asked.

"Well, sir, they do say he was too honest to stay out."



CHAPTER II
THE COLONEL'S ROOMS
AT GREY FRIARS

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THE COLONEL'S ROOMS
AT GREY FRIARS

I HAD kept for the following day — as one sometimes keeps a precious letter, to be opened when alone — the rooms in which the old Pensioner lived and died.

While sketching the court, I had seen the outside walls. There, under my eyes, had been the few steps leading to the low-pitched door, which he had entered so often. The very same window had blinked at me, from under its bushy eyebrows of matted vines — the same through which he had peered when waiting to catch a glimpse of Ethel or Clive. Nothing could have been more convincing, and yet, there, too, all the time staring me in the face, had been the disturbing tablet, declaring that the whole legend was a farce and a sham. *That there was no Colonel Newcome* — never had been any. That one, Thomas Light, a Captain in His Majesty's service, was the simon-pure and only original Colonel inhabiting that room, as could be proved not only by the records of the Charter House, mendaciously labelled and libelled by Mr. Thackeray as Grey Friars, but also by His Majesty's Army Register, in which

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the full name, title, and services of this distinguished military gentleman were duly set forth.

But I would have none of it.

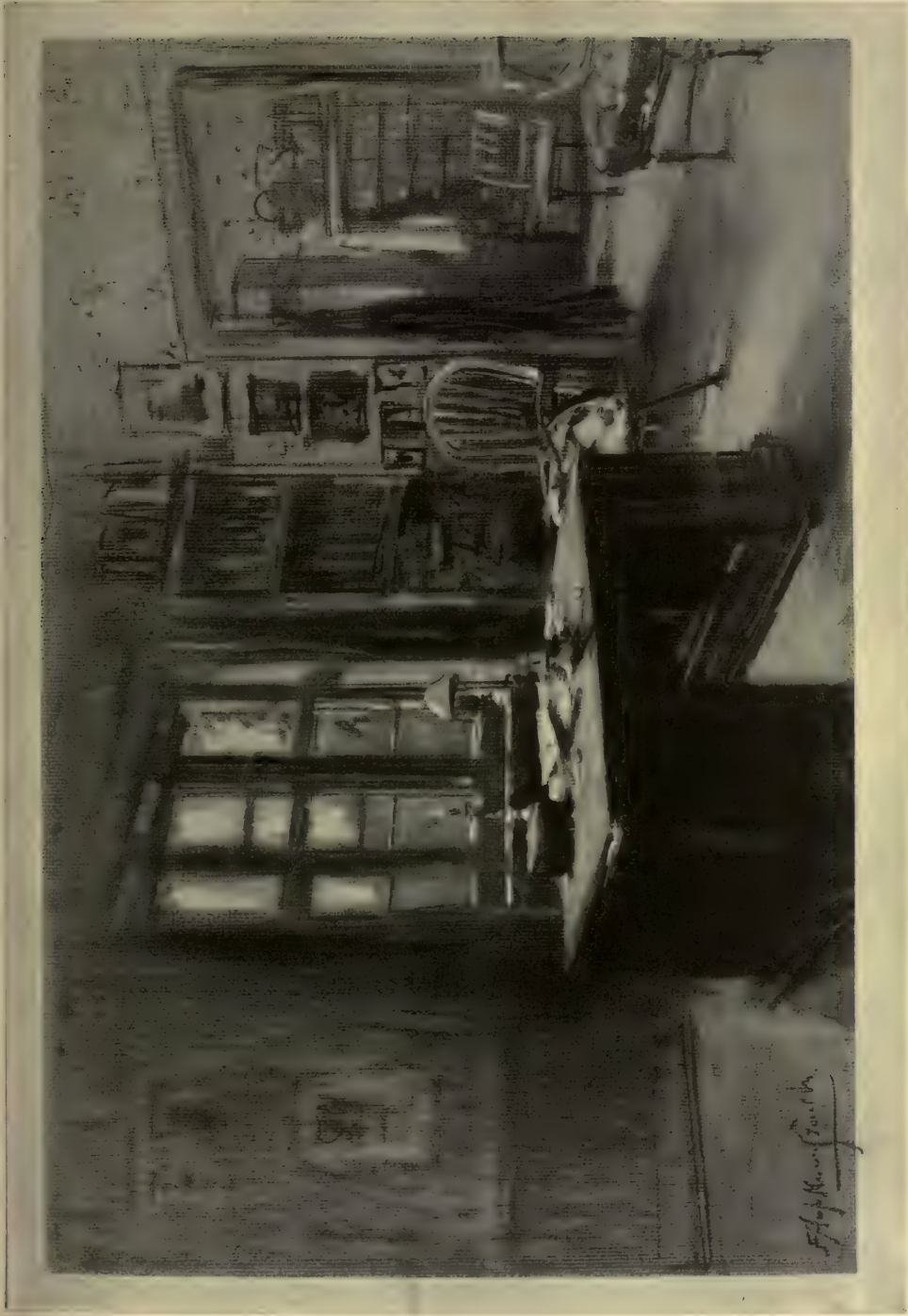
I had seen too many tablets in my time, laudatory and otherwise — some of most disreputable persons — to be swerved from my convictions, and so the next morning I left my chauffeur, Evins (now my right-hand man), outside the gate with instructions to call for me in the late afternoon, and made my way along the open court to the rooms of Colonel Thomas Newcome.

Above the white, well-scoured steps, and just inside the doorway, seen in the sketch, there was another tablet of brass — a real one — giving the date of Mr. Thackeray's visits; and then, sharp to the left, a narrow, dark hall. I fumbled for a knocker or a bell, and, finding none rapped gently, and I must confess, rather timidly — an apologetic knock, as if to say, "impudent is no name for me, but please don't slam the door in my face until you hear me out."

"Come in," called a cheery voice, and I pushed in the door.

"I am making a series of drawings of Mr. Thackeray's haunts," I began, to a short, full-bodied man in silhouette against a window, through which the sun poured, lighting up the desk at which he sat and making an aureole of his gray hair, "and I thought you might be good enough to let me come some time when it would not disturb you, and ——"

"Let you come!" He was on his feet in an instant, with both hands extended. "Of course you can come, and this very minute! If you had waited ten more I should have



ROOM IN WHICH COLONEL NEWCOME DIED



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been gone — stop until I get my hat and cane. Stay here just as long as you please; I shan't be back until near five, when we will have tea — here's the key; hang it on the nail outside when you have finished; and if a tall, lanky, hungry-looking boy raps, you can let him in — he's my nephew — and tell him the jam's all out — so there; and now, good-bye."

"Hold on!" I cried. "Let me get my breath. *Why?*"

"Why what?"

"Why have you taken me in this way? I can't possibly understand how you could ——"

"You don't have to understand. Thirty years ago, when I was a young man, I went to the States and rang the doorbell of a man in Newark, New Jersey, to whom I had a letter. He was father and mother and brother to me during the four years I spent in your country, and since that time I have never let an American pass my door, or enter it, without wanting to give him half of everything I had. I watched you from my window all yesterday morning, and after you had gone and I found out where you came from I was so disappointed I couldn't get to sleep. Don't forget about the jam, and be sure you're here for tea," and he slammed the door behind him.

To be shut up alone in a room belonging to a friend whom you have not seen for years, and whose quarters you have entered for the first time, is a queer experience. To realize that within its walls he himself had died some fifty years ago, and in the very bed at which you are looking, and that every other thing in the place is practically as he left it, adds a touch of the uncanny.

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The same fireplace, too, "with a brisk fire crackling on the hearth; a little tea table laid out, a Bible and spectacles by the side of it, and over the mantelpiece a drawing ——" all just as Ethel saw it. "She looked at the pictures of Clive and his boy; the two sabres crossed over the mantelpiece, the Bible laid on the table, by the old latticed window. She walked slowly up to the humble bed, and sat down on a chair near it. No doubt her heart prayed for him who slept there; she turned round where his black Pensioner's cloak was hanging on the wall, and lifted up the homely garment, and kissed it."

I had all this in my mind as I made a careful inventory of the appointments and furniture. Yes! Everything *was* the same, except the two sabres, and, perhaps, even these were tucked away in the corner by the big wardrobe in the little bedroom beyond; and Clive's portrait, which may also have been spirited away, and some of the earlier Bridgers put in its place.

But the queer easy chair was there, and so was the Pensioner's old black cloak, and on the same hook, no doubt, there by the washstand. That she had lifted up the homely garment and kissed it was easy to understand. I confess I felt something like that myself, as the spell of the place took possession of me. Soon the pictures I loved were flashed on my memory — not only the one I had seen in the Library when a boy, but the many others with which the master has enriched our lives. Clearest of all, because dearest, shone the tall, slim man with the pale, sad face, who, in this very room, had answered, "Adsum."

As I worked on I relived that scene of his closing hours,

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the friends who had been with him stealing into the room, and grouping themselves around me.

"Bayham opened the door . . . and came toward me with a finger on his lip, and a sad, sad countenance. . . . He closed the door gently behind him, and led me into the court. 'Clive is with him, and Miss Newcome. He is very ill. He does not know them,' said Bayham, with a sob. 'He calls out for both of them: they are sitting there, and he does not know them.' . . .

"Sometime afterward Ethel came in with a scared face to our pale group. 'He is calling for you again, dear lady,' she said, going up to Mme. de Florac, who was still kneeling; 'and just now he said he wanted Pendennis to take care of his boy. He will not know you.' She hid her tears as she spoke.

"She went into the room where Clive was at the bed's foot; the old man within it talked on rapidly for a while; then again he would sigh, and be still; once more I heard him say hurriedly, 'Take care of him when I'm in India;' and then with a heartrending voice he called out, 'Leonore, Leonore.' She was kneeling by his side now. The patient's voice sank into faint murmurs; only a moan now and then announced that he was not asleep.

"At the usual evening hour the chapel bell began to toll, and Thomas Newcome's hands outside the bed feebly beat time. And just as the last bell struck a peculiar sweet smile shone over his face, and he lifted up his head a little, and quickly said, 'Adsum!' and fell back. It was the word we used at school, and when names were called: and lo! he, whose heart was as that of a little child, had an-

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swered to his name, and stood in the presence of the Master."

The silence became profound; broken only by the scratching of my coal on my canvas — a weird, uncanny stillness — the kind that a child fears when shut up alone in a bare room. Now and then I caught myself listening for the toll of the chapel bell; more than once I craned my head in the effort to see around the jamb of the wide dividing door hiding the bed on which he breathed his last.

About four o'clock there came a loud knock. I had the story of the jam all ready for the tall, hungry nephew, but it was only the postman who left a newspaper addressed to the Reverend Wm. I. Bridger — the first time I had learned his full name. This I laid on a chair instead of on the desk, I being at the moment busy with its outlines, and there being enough of detail already on its capacious top.

At half-past four there came another knock. This time it was my host, who cried in a voice that put my ghosts to flight, "So glad you stayed — anybody been here? Oh, yes, the postman," and he picked up the wrapper. He had espied it on its chair halfway across the room. "Small place, you see, and I get to know every little thing in it, as a prisoner does in a cell. It's my world, you understand. Now we'll have tea."

He went out and came back with a china pot and a plate of oatmeal, and I was once more in the world of to-day.

"We'll have it on this desk. Do you know Mr. Thackeray wrote the last chapters of 'The Newcomes' on this very desk? You remember he had a way of cramming his manuscript

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in his pocket, and writing anywhere he happened to be — at his club, or in some hotel abroad” (I had always believed that the novel was finished in Paris, and was glad to be set right), “and so it is quite reasonable to suppose that as he spent a good many days in this very room with his friend Captain Light, he should have brought his manuscript along with him. The original, you know, is now in the new Charter House Library at Godalming. The Head Master will have it shown to you with pleasure; and, by the by, if you don’t mind listening a moment, I have somewhere in my own handwriting an account of these visits of Thackeray to Captain Thomas Light, which I compiled from various sources, and which I will first read and then give you. Oh, here it is,” and he reached for a bundle of papers in a drawer under the teapot, and wheeling his chair closer to the light of the window, cleared his throat and began as follows:

“‘For Col. Newcome — the most memorable character in the story — there have been many prototypes suggested; in him, we may take it, Thackeray wished to portray a typical simple gentleman, & for this purpose, made up a “composite” portrait, of which many notable features seem to have been supplied by the character of the Author’s step-father, Major Carmichael Smythe. . . . I knew also Captain Light, an old officer of fine profile, & grand “frosty *pow*,” who had served Her Majesty & her Royal predecessors, in an infantry regiment, & had lost his sight (so he told us), from the glare of the rock of Gibraltar. Blindness had brought him to seek the shelter of Thomas Sutton’s Hos-

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pital (1), where he lived, with the respect of old & young (2), tended lovingly through all the hours of daylight by his Daughter, Miss Light, who retired to some lodging hard by, when bed-time came.

“To the quarters of this good old gentleman, I led Thackeray, & after knocking, I entered, & remember saying “How do you do, Miss Light? I have brought Mr. Thackeray, the Author, to see you & the Captain” . . . blushing to the roots of my hair . . . Thackeray then sat down & talked, very pleasantly, with the old Captain — ever & anon lapsing into reverie, when the “Colonel” and “Ethel,” we may be sure, took their places with him — and then rousing himself to talk courteously again. . . . When the fact became known that Col. Newcome was to be a “Codd” (3), & that Thackeray had been making a “study” for his character, it may be that there was a shade of jealousy in Codd-land. My friend Codd Larky (4) told me, that I had taken him to the wrong man; & that he should have gone to Captain Nicholson, an old Guardsman . . . but I did not know *him*.”

“And here is another,” continued Doctor Bridger, “which I copied from the inscription on the tablet outside:

“In this room lived Captain
Thomas Light whom
Thackeray visited
when writing the last
Chapters of “The Newcomes.”

— “*From an inscription under my window.*

“Wm. J. B.

“House No. 16; Room No. 70.”

IN THACKERAY'S LONDON

“And here is yet another — such pitiful things occur here among our Brothers. Sometimes I write them down and file them away. Perhaps some day they will be found by some of my successors, and add to the history of our home. Listen to this; I will read it if you don't mind:

““Pathetic circumstances attach to the death of Dr. B., one of the Brethren of Charter House, London, which took place on Tuesday evening. For months past Dr., who was over eighty, had been in failing health, but his work in connection with the invention of an electric lamp for mines, on which he had been engaged for many years, had buoyed him up. The ultimate failure of his plans greatly depressed him, and he gradually sank and died in his rooms in Charter House.

““On Saturday he received a letter from the Patent Office, informing him that his application for the taking out of a Patent had been approved, but he remarked, “It is too late.””

“No, take it along with you — I make them in hectograph so my friends can each have a copy.”

And so, with the oatmeal eaten — there had been enough for two, the nephew not having put in an appearance — and the tea drank, I left my genial host, whose reverence for the Colonel was like my own, promising to come again in the morning when he would show me over Washhouse Court, where the Colonel often walked; through the cloister, where Mr. Thackeray's and John Leech's tablets were to be seen high on the white walls, and into the chapel, where Thackeray prayed as a boy, and where his greatest and best beloved creation prayed both as boy and man.

CHAPTER III
WHERE THE COLONEL WALKED
AND PRAYED



CHAPTER III

WHERE THE COLONEL WALKED AND PRAYED

MY GUIDE, the Colonel's brother Pensioner, was waiting for me the next morning when I pushed open his door. He had taken his cloak from its hook, and was slipping it over his shoulders.

"We always wear our gowns when we walk about the courts, but if you do not mind," he added, with a laugh, "I will leave my hat behind. I like to feel the fresh air on my poor scalp," and he tapped the bald spot behind his forehead. "Let us go first through Washhouse Court — this way — it is only a step, almost opposite where we stand."

While he was speaking we had crossed the gravelled space, dived under a dark archway, and were standing in a small square court that looked like a prison yard, so bare, so desolate, and so unclimbable was it. The scarred, soot-encrusted walls were pock-marked with the maladies of centuries; here and there a small window peered out upon the desolate open, with an uncertain, frightened look; some high, smooth chimneys rose sheer from the ground without a foothold; the roof came down with a sharp slant — that, too, was unscalable — while the only exit lay under another

IN THACKERAY'S LONDON

archway, with an equally narrow entrance. If, in the old days, anybody had been turned loose in this small area, and the doors of both archways locked, they might well have given up the ghost, so far as their ultimate freedom was concerned.

"Why Washhouse Court?" I asked, conceding in my mind the possibility of stringing clotheslines, but in doubt about the tubs.

"Because it *is*! I have a couple of shirts in there now," and he pointed to a framing of low windows and wooden doors, level with the rough stone pavement. "The linen of our old friend, the Colonel, came here too. We have mangles and all sorts of funny machines now, but in his days it was just plain elbow-grease, knuckles, and plenty of soap. Then it was known as "Laundry Court," and, in addition to a washhouse, boasted a brewhouse, a kitchen, bakehouse, and fishhouse. Since then as you can see, the trowel and chisel of the restorers, have patched up the holes that time and neglect have made, but much of the old wall, especially that part above the archway, is quite as it appeared in 1572 to the Duke of Norfolk the day he was arrested in the great Hall, behind which I live, for conspiracy against his Queen."

By this time we had dived under the archway seen in my sketch, passed through still another open space, and found ourselves at last in the little ante-chapel leading to the chapel itself.

Again I was on holy ground!

Here the Colonel had walked to and from chapel service, and in the same black Pensioner's cloak that Ethel had



WASHHOUSE COURT—GREY FRIARS

IN THACKERAY'S LONDON

kissed. Here, too, when the organ had played them out of chapel at length, Pendennis, with heavy heart, had strolled with him on his way back to his room. "And I take it uncommonly kind of you," the Colonel, with flushed, wan face, had said, "and I thank God for you, sir. Why, sir, I am as happy as the day is long."

This ante-chapel is but little changed, and, judging from the uneven surfaces of the several panes of glass in the queer sashes with rounded tops, the windows looking out upon the adjoining court, must be the same as those that lighted the Colonel's way. Nor can there be any doubt that the flooring of stone slabs, marking the graves of the long-ago dead, was the very same which had reëchoed the sound of his footfalls. There was a new tablet, of course, on the opposite wall — several of them in fact, one bearing the name of the Colonel's creator — and another that of John Leech, his dear friend and brother Carthusian — or Cistercian, as Thackeray chooses to call them. And there were still others, bearing the names of Sir Henry Havelock, John Wesley, Roger Williams (founder of Rhode Island), and various distinguished Carthusians, many of which the Colonel must have looked on as he walked bareheaded to his prayers.

Morning service was over when we entered, and that cold hush, which one sometimes feels on entering an empty church, greeted us — not the hush of death, but rather one of sleep. Even the effigy of old Thomas Sutton, to whose princely munificence the Brothers owe their homes and support, appeared to be more asleep than dead these two hundred years. And so did the organ, high up above my

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head; and the prayer-books lining the ledges of the pews — all seemed quietly dozing.

It has every right to go to sleep if it pleases, this relic of the Carthusian Monks, for most of it dates back to the middle of the fourteenth century. Since that time the north and west walls have been rebuilt, and the open arches erected by Thomas Sutton's executors, to make room for his remains. As in the Colonel's day, so now: "The chapel is lighted, and the Founders' Tomb, with its grotesque carvings, monsters, heraldries, darkles and shines with the most wonderful shadows and lights. There he lies, Fundator Noster, in his ruff and gown, awaiting the great Examination Day."

In the pavement near by, there is, among others, the gravestone of Thomas Walker, Head Master 1679-1728, who had Addison, Steel, and Wesley for his pupils. In the belfry above, hangs the great bell, recast in 1631. This tolls the curfew at 8 P. M. in winter, and 9 P. M. in summer, the number of its strokes corresponding to that of the Brothers within the hospital. It was to the strokes of this very bell that Thomas Newcome's hand kept time, beating feebly outside his bed.

I was not sorry that just here my friend and guide bade me good-bye. He had work to do — a service to hold in a small church outside the grounds, so he told me with a certain pride in his voice, as if reminding me that he was not wholly dependent on the charity of the old fellow whose bones were enclosed in the marble tomb. I, too, had work to do. I had memories and traditions and scenes out of my boyhood days to talk over with myself, and I had a



CLOISTER OF CHAPEL—GREY FRIARS



IN THACKERAY'S LONDON

sketch to make — one rather difficult because of its cross lights, and because of a big column which stood out clear from the gloom of the choir loft and the deep-shadowed recess beneath the gallery.

But even then I was not alone. The chapel was peopled. It was Founders' Day once more — Pendennis beside me, intent on the ceremonies.

“Yonder sit forty cherry-cheeked boys, thinking about home and holidays to-morrow. Yonder sit some threescore old gentlemen pensioners of the hospital, listening to the prayers and the psalms. You hear them coughing feebly in the twilight — the old reverend black-gowns. . . . A plenty of candles lights up this chapel, and this scene of age and youth, and early memories, and pompous death. How solemn the well-remembered prayers are, here uttered again in the place where in childhood we used to hear them! . . .

“‘23. The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord: and he delighteth in his way.

“‘24. Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down: for the Lord upholdeth him with his hand.

“‘25. I have been young, and now am old: yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging their bread.’

“As we came to this verse, I chanced to look up from my book toward the swarm of black-coated pensioners and among them — among them — sat Thomas Newcome.

“His dear old head was bent down over his prayer-book; there was no mistaking him. He wore the black gown of the pensioners of the Hospital of Grey Friars. His Order

IN THACKERAY'S LONDON

of the Bath was on his breast. He stood there among the poor brethren, uttering the responses to the psalm. The steps of this good man had been ordered hither by Heaven's decree: to this almshouse! Here it was ordained that a life all love, and kindness, and honour should end! I heard no more of prayers, and psalms, and sermon after that. How dared I to be in a place of mark, and he yonder among the poor? Oh, pardon, you noble soul! I ask forgiveness of you for being of a world that has so treated you — you my better, you the honest, and gentle, and good! I thought the service would never end, or the organist's voluntaries, or the preacher's homily."

Working away on my sketching stool, transferring the "darkles and lights," of the chapel's lines and masses to my paper, no wonder that I lost for the time all sense of proportion, and confounded fancy with fact. I had always known I should meet the Colonel just as I believe I shall yet meet Sam Weller and Micawber and Dot Perrybingle, and so, when an old brother, in his black gown, stole in while I worked and sat down noiselessly in a pew to my right, his face buried in his hands as he prayed, I was convinced that he was none other than my hero, until he raised his head and I caught sight of a gray beard. Even then I worked on, dallying over my surface, lifting my head for confirmation every time I heard a footfall in the ante-chapel beyond; forever on the watch for the thin, military figure, with the pale, smooth face.



INTERIOR OF CHAPEL AT GREY FRIARS



CHAPTER IV
SMITHFIELD MARKET



CHAPTER IV

SMITHFIELD MARKET

WE MADE the ascent of Snow Hill," writes Thackeray in "The Newcomes." "We passed by the miry pens of Smithfield. We travel through the Street of St. John and presently reach the gateway in Cistercian Square where lies the old Hospital of Grey Friars."

This is the route Pendennis's cab took from Lincoln's Inn Fields, Ethel and he sitting inside, on the way to see Thomas Newcome, and this, too, was my own route except that I occupied a modern up-to-date taxi, and Evins, my chauffeur, was at the wheel. The "miry pens," filled with the cattle of the period, are replaced now by high glass-covered sheds under which pass huge wagons drawn by great Normandy horses, loaded down with most of the chops, breakfast bacon, and roast beef of old England. It was raining, as usual, and Evins had backed my moving studio under the eaves of a protecting shed. The crowd was so dense, and the movement of wheel and hoof so constant, that I waited until the greater part of the early morning rush was over before commencing my sketch.

"Do you know this part of London, Evins?"

IN THACKERAY'S LONDON

"Not much, sir. We don't get out here often. Round the Empire Theatre, or maybe out by St. Johns Wood late at night, or Paddington way, or Kensington, but this is new to me. I was never to Charter House until I took you there three days ago. I been a-reading up about it in a book one of my pals has at the garage."

"One of Mr. Thackeray's?"

"Yes, I think that was the writer's name — something about an officer called Newcome."

"Do you get a chance to read much?"

"No, sir — can't say I do — barring the *Mirror* and sometimes the *News*. I been around though considerable."

"In England?"

"No, farther than that."

"America?"

"No, I wish I had. I was in Cape Town for a bit."

"What were you doing there? Driving?"

"Not all the time, sir. I was laid up for a while — had a bad crack on my knee — got a twist in it — not much of a knee now," and he tapped it with his closed hand, "especially in bad weather — been bothering me all the week."

"What happened? Thrown off your box?"

"Not exactly, sir, but it felt like it when they picked me up. Then I got a clip on my ear — you can see it, sir, if you look — little ragged yet."

"In the hospital, were you?"

"Yes, for six weeks or so."

"What happened then?"

"Oh, I had served my time and they sent me home."

"The company you worked for?"



SMITHFIELD MARKET



IN THACKERAY'S LONDON

"No, the Head Surgeon. There wasn't many of my company left."

A light began to dawn upon me. I took another look at his face, and the way his head, with the ragged ear, sat on his broad shoulders, and the clear, steady gaze with which he regarded me.

"Do you mean you were in the army, Evins?"

"Yes, sir."

"During the Boer War?"

"Yes, sir."

"And where did you get that crack?"

"At Spion Kop, sir. I had another through my sleeve that burned the skin off me arm, but it didn't amount to anything. It was pretty warm for us, sir, for a while. Shall I back, sir? The rain's clearin' up a bit, and there's only a few of the wagons left. Maybe we can get one of them to stand still."

I did not answer for some minutes. "England is full of just such men," I said to myself; "have to use a corkscrew to get anything out of them." I have known dozens just like him. The last thing any one of them wants to talk about is the part he played in some drama in which every man was a hero — except in his own opinion.

My chaffeur had loomed up into another and a more distinct personality — one that inspired a certain deference. Here was I, riding around London with a fellow who opened the door of my vehicle like a lackey, touched his hat when I gave him an order, brought me beer and sandwiches when I was hungry, sharpened my charcoals when I was hurried, and who ten years ago had been dragged off the worst battle-

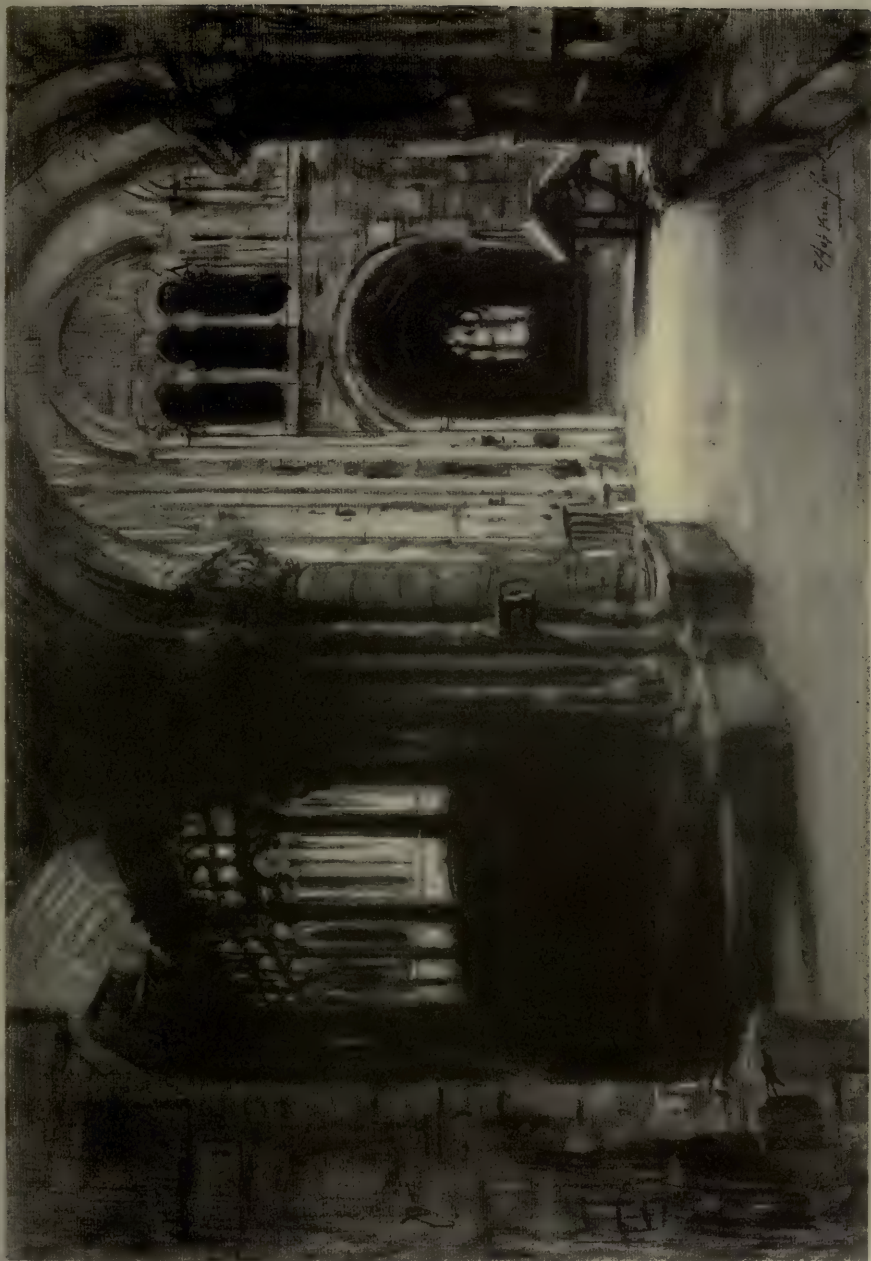
IN THACKERAY'S LONDON

field of the war with the ravellings of three bullets clinging to his person. I soon found myself under considerable restraint in not shaking hands with him, and I would have done so had not a certain look in his eyes warned me that, for the time being at least, he was my servant, and that each one of us must keep his own place.

This same look was in his eye when I finished my sketch of the Market, and rose. It rather checked my enthusiasm, and I merely said, "Lucky you got out with a whole skin," and bade him drive on to St. Bartholomew's the Great.

As we approached its site from around the wide Square, my eye ran along the bare wall of a great building, commercial or otherwise, until it rested on a small archway — the only entrance from this side to the church itself. Leaving the taxi on the curb, we dodged under its arch, skirted a narrow pavement, flanked by a damp, mouldy graveyard, frowned on by a row of dingy, soot-begrimed houses; then crossing a little dip in the sidewalk we made our way through the small swinging doors, into the narrow vestibule, and so on into the church.

If Mr. Thackeray or any one of his characters had aught to do with St. Bartholomew's the Great, there is nothing I can find in a diligent search through his published books to prove it. And yet, it is hardly to be supposed that he could have been unconscious of its dignity and beauty even when he was a boy at Grey Friars School; and later on, when he would revisit his old haunts on Founders' Day, reviving his early memories of the places round about its quiet courts. Nor was it too far away from those quiet



ST. BARTHOLOMEW'S THE GREAT



IN THACKERAY'S LONDON

courts themselves for Thomas Newcome not to have made the church a resting place when he took his morning walks abroad.

I choose to think so at any rate. But if these excuses do not suffice, then I will make a clean breast of it — it was because I could not resist its beauty.

Other churches have I studied in my wanderings; many and various cathedrals, basilicas and mosques have delighted me. I know, too, the colour and the value of tapestry and rich hangings, of mosaics, porphyry and verd antiques; of fluted alabaster and the delicate tracery of the arabesque; but the velvety quality of London soot when applied to the rough surfaces of rudely chiselled stone, and the soft loveliness gained by grime and smoke, came to me as a revelation.

This rich black which, like a tropical fungus, grows and spreads through its interior, hiding under its soft, caressing touch the rough angles and insistent edges of the Norman, is what the bloom is to the grape; what the dark purpling is to the plum, mellowing from sight the brilliancy of the under skin. And there are wide coverings of it, too, as if some master decorator had wielded a great coal, and, at one sweep of his hand, had rubbed its glorious black into every crevice, crack, and cranny of wall, column, and arch.

Certain it is that no other medium than the one I have used could give any idea of its charm. Neither oil, water-colour nor pastel will transmit it — no, nor the dry point or bitten plate. The soot of centuries, the fogs of countless Novembers, the smoke of a thousand firesides, were the pigments which the Master Painter set upon his

IN THACKERAY'S LONDON

palette in this task of giving us one exquisitely beautiful interior wholly *in black and white*. As I worked on I caught Evins pausing now and then in his silent tiptoeing about its aisles, fingering the walls here and there, as if wondering whether its ancient smudge would come off.

"Like an old chimney, ain't it, sir?" he remarked, when he had resumed his place beside me. "Looks as if they had built a fire in here somewhars, and stopped up the flue. Rum old place, anyway; I never see it afore. Pretty old, ain't it, sir?"

I nodded assent and worked on, giving him in a staccato form (for I cannot talk when I am at work) such information from various guide books telling of the interior of the famous church as I had gleaned the night before.

One paragraph at the bottom of a page came to my mind, upon which I dilated with confidence, our ears at the moment being filled with the sound of an anvil and hammer, reverberating through an open door. The noise came from a shop which seemed to be part and parcel of the edifice itself — *was* a part, so the sexton, or clerk, to whom I appealed told me in passing, adding that it had always been a blacksmith shop, and was still, and would continue to be until the end of time. Indeed, its attempted removal had so seriously endangered the repairs, completed some fifty years before, that the authorities had been compelled to let the shop stay — a confirmation which established me at once as an oracle in my chauffeur's mind.

Evins drank it all in, putting questions now and then, most of which, being outside my line of research, brought me up standing, the very obliging and learned clerk having

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gone to his luncheon. I could, of course, have invented an answer, and indulged in glittering generalities, which would have satisfied him. I could have parried the questions; but I did none of these things. I simply threw up my hands. It seemed the only honest way out. It might not have appeared to me in that light the day before, but it did now. Yesterday I was driving around with just a plain chauffeur, number something or other, in a W. & G. taxi. To-day I was the guest, or comrade, or companion, of a man who would have been wearing the D. S. O. had a reporter come along at the right moment and spelt his name correctly in the despatches — a man, too, who thought so little of the incident that I had to use a pair of nippers and a force pump to extract from him the slightest detail regarding the occurrence.

It was now three o'clock, and yet my sketch was still unfinished; for church architecture must be *drawn* — not guessed at.

The taxi, of course, required neither food or water, but the chauffeur might.

“Getting hungry, Evins?”

“Well, yes, a little peckish, sir. I was up at six — but it don't matter; keep on — I can stand it if you can.”

“I would send you for some sandwiches and a couple of bottles of beer if it wasn't a church — but of course ——”

“No, of course not, sir. It's bad luck to picnic on a tomb.”

“And then again, Evins, I've got a better idea. I'll be through in half an hour, and then we'll drive down Holborn, near Staple Inn, and get a chop and a mug apiece.”

IN THACKERAY'S LONDON

"Thank you, sir," and he touched his hat.

All of this happened, even to a second mug apiece, the last accompanied by my cigar case which I sent to his table by the waiter with a duplicate of the afternoon paper I was reading.

And so a sort of comradeship was established between us — one that, as the days went by, grew closer and more human.

CHAPTER V
STAPLE INN



CHAPTER V

STAPLE INN

THE wet streets and sidewalks of London, glistening under its silver-gray sky, little rivulets of quick-silver escaping everywhere, are always a delight to me. When with these I get a background of — and I always do — flat masses of quaint buildings, all detail lost in the haze of mist and smoke, my delight rises to enthusiasm. Nowhere else in the world are the “values” so marvellously preserved. You start your foreground — say a figure, or umbrella, or a cab — with a stroke of jet black, and the perspective instantly fades into grays of steeple, dome or roof, so delicate and vapoury that there is hardly a shade of difference between earth and sky.

And charcoal is again the one only medium which will express it. Charcoal is the unhampered, the free, the personal, the individual medium. No water, no oil, no palette, no squeezing of tubes, nor mixing of tints; no scraping, scumbling, or other dilatory and exasperating necessities. Just a piece of coal, the size of a small pocket pencil, held flat between the thumb and forefinger, a sheet of paper, and then “let go.” Yes, one thing more — care must be taken to have this thumb and forefinger fastened to a sure, know-

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ing and fearless hand, worked by an arm which plays easily and loosely in a ball-socket set firmly near your backbone. To carry out the metaphor, the steam of your enthusiasm, kept in working order by the safety-valve of your experience, and regulated by the ball-governor of your art knowledge — such as composition drawing, mass and light and shade — is then turned on.

Now you can “let go,” and in the fullest sense, or you will never arrive. My own experience has taught me that if an outdoor charcoal sketch, covering and containing all a man can see — and he should neither record nor explain anything more — is not completely finished in three hours, it can never be finished by the same man in three days or three years.

And London is the best place I know for practising the art — especially if it be raining, and there was no question that it was raining on this particular morning in Holborn, when Evins backed his taxi into a position from which I could get the old Staple Inn pitched forward against a luminous gray sky, its gables reflected in a stream of silver, the sidewalk and broad road thronged with pedestrians picking their way amidst an endless procession of wheeled traffic.

The Inn itself I had sketched the year before — that is the garden part of it, especially the row of time-blackened buildings holding the rooms where Mr. Grewgious in “Edwin Drood” had his office. Its staggering street front was, however, new to my coal.

St. Bartholomew's Church might have been debatable ground, but here I am sure of my facts. Opposite Staple

IN THACKERAY'S LONDON

Inn stands, or did stand but a few years ago, the famous old Furnivals Inn, where Dickens had his quarters, and where he wrote the opening chapters of "Pickwick." Hither Thackeray betook himself one fine morning with a portfolio of sketches under his arm. He had read the first numbers of that immortal book, and as he was convinced he would never amount to anything as an author himself, he had come to beg of Dickens the chance to earn an honest penny as an illustrator. Mr. Dickens was just entering into that great fame as a writer of fiction which has never dimmed from that time. The young artist had scarcely attempted literature, and had still to tread the paths of obscurity. . . . Some years later, when both men were famous, Thackeray told the story at a dinner of the Royal Academy at which Mr. Dickens was present.

"I can remember when Mr. Dickens was a very young man, and had commenced delighting the world with some charming humorous works in covers, which were coloured light green and came out once a month, that this young man wanted an artist to illustrate his writings; and I recollect walking up to his chambers in Furnival's Inn, with two or three drawings in my hand, which, strange to say, he did not find suitable. But for the unfortunate blight which came over my artistical existence, it would have been my pride and my pleasure to have endeavoured one day to find a place on these walls for one of my performances."

It was not until a year had passed that Thackeray began seriously to devote himself to literary labour; and his articles, published over a *nom de plume*, contain the best evidences that he felt no shadow of ill-will for a rejec-

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tion which he always good-humouredly alluded to as "Mr. Pickwick's lucky escape."

As to the Inn itself, we learn that the front, shown in my sketch, dates from the latter part of the sixteenth century; and the outer buildings and courtyard from between 1729-59. That it used to be known as "le Stapled Halle," and was, in its origin, the house of a guild in some way responsible for the collection of the duties on wool—the data ending with the announcement that in one of the top rooms—quite under the roof in fact—Dr. Johnson wrote "Rasselas."

In 1884 the freehold was sold, and the insurance company across the way took possession, and I am inclined to think with a certain sense of their responsibilities. Perhaps their conscience had begun to smite them after they had wiped dear old Furnival's Inn off the planet, erecting in its stead a modern combination of brick, stone, and slate. For, when they looked Staple Inn over, they then and there, God bless them! resolved to prop it up as best they could, to keep it from sprawling its full length on the sidewalk. And a very creditable restoration it is.

This, let me say, applies only to the partly modernized street front. Once inside the gateway, and back you go hundreds of years, three hundred I am sure in the second court where Mr. Grewgious earned his bread—or tried to—in some chambers over the main door of a dull building, mouldy with grime, its windows blinking in the gloom of the desolate garden, set out with seats, and miserable, droopy, disheartened trees which stand aimlessly about. A queer gate leads out somewhere into the unknown (to me) sug-



STAPLE INN

IN THACKERAY'S LONDON

gesting a short cut to somewhere else. I can well believe that the snubbed and humiliated artist, after such a rebuff, crossed the street to avoid the gaze of passersby, dodging into this same court, where he wandered about in its graveyard silence trying to pull himself together; and so on, and out the rear gate to his lodgings in Great Coram Street, thoroughly convinced that life for him was a failure, and that neither literature nor art (which last he loved best) could support him.

Something which might have been as disheartening happened to me too at Staple Inn.

I came very near being locked up.

Before getting ready to sketch in the streets of any city, I invariably look up the constituted authorities. This habit of mine has given me the freedom of Constantinople, Moscow, and Sofia — three cities where even the sight of a white umbrella is enough to call out the guard. I haven't the space to tell about it here, but it would be mighty interesting reading if I had.

This particular morning I began by sending Evins, with my compliments, and visiting card — a wonderful thing is a visiting card to people who have never seen one, and policemen are seldom society men — with the request that he would “step lively,” as I was beginning work and wanted to know just where his Bobbyship would permit me to place my taxi.

“Anywhere ye like, sir — big wide street — and ye won't be in the way,” and with a wave of his hand he bit off the end of the cigar that, in parting, I had handed him, and kept on up the street.

IN THACKERAY'S LONDON

There are a lot of people in Holborn who have nothing to do. This was their "star" morning, and before my easel was up, those whose heads were not jammed in the side windows, were crawling over the wheels and top. Evins's efforts to scrape most of them off resulted in considerable back-talk in strong Cockney dialect, interspersed with flashes of profanity. At this another Bobby appeared, this time in the offing, a large, well-set up Bobby, with a waist-line that was wider than his shoulders.

"Ye can't stop there," I heard him call, and out went the flat of his hand in protest. The upheld fist of a policeman we know about — and also the outstretched finger — one means fight and the other "now will you be good," but the open hand held flat, is the barricade of the Commune behind which he proposes to fight to the death.

"Ask the officer to kindly come to the taxi," I called through the window — as I reached for my cigar case — the rain was coming down in sheets.

"He says he won't, and he'll summons both of us if we don't move on," Evins shouted back.

I got out.

"Officer," I began, giving him the same military salute I always accord to potentates and kings, "I have already got permission from one of your men who ——"

"Well, ye can't git none from me. I tell ye to move on; take an act of Parliament to let ye keep a cab there blocking up the street."

"But I ——"

"Well, there ain't no buts; you just ——"

Evins sidled up. He had a bad glint in his eye, and the

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line of his mouth had so straightened that it looked like a healed sabre cut.

"There ain't none of your men that ain't been obliging to the gentleman since we been to work (I inwardly thanked him for that), and I don't see why you should put ——"

"Well, it ain't for you to see. I get my orders — are ye going to move, or shall I ——"

"Hold on, Evins!" I said. These fellows with balls in their legs often get mixed as to whom they are fighting; and then again, a London Bobby is backed by the whole British Empire. "Just one moment, officer; where is your nearest police station?"

"What's that got to do with it?" He had evidently begun to take my measure, for the sentence was finished in a tone bordering on respectful toleration.

"Nothing to you perhaps, but a lot to me. You are the first policeman in all London who has not been particularly polite. If my cab is in the wrong place I'll move it somewhere else — anywhere you say. If you can't give me this permission, I'll find somebody who will. Where will I go?"

To tell the truth, with all my bravado I was shaking in my shoes. But I knew I had to back up Evins in some way — comrades on the same battlefield, so to speak — or I'd lose my chauffeur's respect, and that would be worse than being locked up.

"Down by the Viaduct — and much good will it do ye."

"I know it, sir," said Evins behind his hand. "I was run in there myself once for speedin'."

Into the taxi again, the crowd pressing closer, wondering what it was all about; a whirl through streaming streets,

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and we pulled up in front of the customary overhead lantern.

Two policemen guarded the door.

"Is the inspector in?"

"Who wants him?"

"Take him this card, and say that a gentleman from New York wants to see him at once."

I could put on all the airs I happened to have about me now — at least until I got inside.

"This way, sir." The "sir" was encouraging. I was not to be thrown out anyway — that is, not neck and heels.

A short, stockily built man of fifty, in a loose blue jacket, and whose calm eyes had uncovered every act of my life in the first glance, advanced to meet me, my card in his hand.

"What is it?" — not "Who have I the honour?" or "What can I do for you?" but just "What is it?"

I fell at once into telegraphic abbreviation.

"First officer — Holborn — permitted me to sketch old Staple Inn from taxi — second officer drove me away — said blocking up street — came to you in consequence."

Another exact caliper gaze. He was conning over my ancestry now, trying to find out whether any of them were hanged.

"Where was your taxi?"

"Curb of street below Inn."

"The widest part?"

I nodded.

"Any crowd?"

"Yes, but rain kept them moving."

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"Ugh!" The sound of this word cannot be given with any vowels or consonants with which I am familiar. As near as I could judge it meant confidence in my statements, qualified disgust at the stand taken by the second Bobby, and a desire to see me through.

"Have you any complaint to make of the officer?"

"No. He was only doing his duty — as he saw it."

The eye relaxed its grip. He was now convinced of the unblemished life of my ancestors — my tactful reply did the business.

He strode to the telephone.

Buzz — buzz.

More buzz, buzz — a distant buzzing — up Holborn way, I afterward discovered.

". . . Well, that's pretty wide there."

Buzz, Buzz.

"Yes."

Then he turned to me. "You can go back. The officer has his instructions."

That was a great shout which went up from the crowd when Evins, with his face one broad, illimitable smile, whirled our cab into place again!

"Got square with that Yarmouth bloater," was all he said.



CHAPTER VI
NO. 36 ONSLOW SQUARE



CHAPTER VI

NO. 36 ONSLOW SQUARE

I WISH I could have seen inside, for here it was that Thackeray lived from 1853 to 1861. "The den in which he wrote," says Mr. Crowe, "was very cheerful; its windows commanded a view of the old avenue of elm trees. The walls were decked with wonderful water-colour scenes by his favourite, Mr. Bennet, and quite in a central place was the beautiful mezzotint of Sir Joshua's 'Little Girl in the Snow,' a playful terrier and robin red-breast as her companions. As a change he would at times prefer the Sunflower room and dictate while lounging on an ottoman — too often battling with pain in later days. The little bronze statuette of George IV on the mantelpiece had the look of an ironical genius loci, when the work of hammering into the lectures of the Four Georges was on the anvil."

I could only look up at the windows, as many another pilgrim has done. But my imagination, at least, was not barred an entrance by their protective panes. On the other side of them the great man had written the closing chapters of "The Newcomes," all of "The Virginians," part of "Philip," "The Roundabout Papers," and "Four Georges."

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His private secretary, Mr. James Hodder, has told us how the work was done: behind these very sashes.

“Duty called me to his bedchamber every morning, and as a general rule I found him up and ready to begin work, though he was sometimes in doubt and difficulty as to whether he should commence sitting, or standing, or walking, or lying down. Often he would light a cigar, and, after pacing the room for a few minutes, would put the unsmoked remnant on the mantelpiece and resume his work with increased cheerfulness, as if he gathered fresh inspiration from the gentle odours of the sublime tobacco.”

It is not very agreeable — this standing outside looking up at the windows of somebody you have loved, watching for a shadow on a curtain, or the round of a head framed in a pane of glass.

The street is a narrow one — perhaps the width of two taxis, and when Evins brought his own opposite No. 36, I was much too near for any satisfactory composition. There was, however, a wonderful old Square opposite, filled with trees, grass, perambulators, nursemaids, lovely English children — the loveliest the world over, and the rosiest and best-behaved — besides no end of gravelled walks spattered with shadows, for the weather had cleared and the sun had come out and was shining away for all it was worth. And there was an iron fence — a tall, ugly, forbidding fence, armed with bayonets interspersed with grim-looking gates, that shut to with a sudden snap as if lying in wait for your finger, and could only be opened by keys belonging to the owners of the rows of houses flanking its four sides. A drawing made from the sidewalk facing the iron fence would



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show only the front steps, one window, the door, and perhaps the bronze tablet at the left, which the London Society has placed there. I must get into the Square and utilize the trees and fence as a foreground, if my sketch was to convey any idea of this most delightful of Thackeray's later homes.

So I rang the door bell — the same, no doubt, Mr. Thackeray had handled hundreds of times, for there have been few changes since he left it fifty years ago — nothing but a touch of paint, perhaps, and the usual repairs.

In answer a head was thrust up from the area.

"My lady 'as gone to Hascot, sir — nobody else at 'ome."

"Could I get the key of the Square?" etc., and then there followed the customary statement — one which I knew now by rote — of my nationality, profession, purpose, and blameless character.

No, she didn't know where her lady kept the key. The gardener who worked in the Square, and who could be found in the church at the end of the street — I could see it right before me — had a key — I might get it "off 'im."

I knew all about the church. Mr. Thackeray's daughter, Lady Ritchie, to whom he dictated much of "The New-comers," had described it clearly in one of her introductions to her father's published works. The volume was then in my cab. I had brought it along to make sure of the identical house in which he had lived.

"Our old house was the fourth," she says, "counting the end house from the corner by the church in Onslow Square, the church being on the left hand, and the avenue of old

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trees running in front of our drawing-room windows. I used to look up from the avenue and see my father's head bending over his work in the study window, which was over the drawing-room."

Neither the gardener nor the sexton materialized under Evins's still hunt, and I rang the bell of the door one house below.

This time Jeames Yellowplush appeared.

"Notat'ome" (all one word); "me Leddy 'as gone to Hascot."

I was feeling in my pocket among my loose shillings for half a crown, in order to continue the conversation properly when the first housemaid's head was again thrust out of the areaway of No. 36. I discovered later that Evins had been indulging in a highly coloured description of my morals and attainments.

"The cook 'as found it, sir. Bring it back, please, when you are through."

"Most estimable person, Evins," I said, diving into my open pocket — when is it ever closed abroad! "Give her this," and I inserted the key and swung back the gate.

I had now a foreground of tree-trunks, clumps of bushes, a flat pavement splashed with shadows, and behind and through the iron bars of the ugly, armed-to-the-teeth fence — especially through the wide opening made by the gate — a view of all of the house frontways, and most of it down and up as far as the second story.

But even a closed and locked public park lacks privacy when you are working under a white umbrella. The "prams" began to gather, slowly and solemnly as a flock

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of turkeys gather — a good simile this, if you have ever seen turkeys parade — pushed by the comely nursemaids in caps with wide strings that nigh swept the ground, little pink heads nestling inside, some asleep, some not — most of them not. Stiff-starched-frocked-children came next. Some four years old, some five — among them a boy of six — one of those bare-headed, bare-legged, rosy-cheeked, lovable, huggable, and spankable little beggars that you want to take in your arms at sight.

He squared himself as he looked on, his wee chubby hands hooked behind his plump back — and remarked gravely:

“My word, but that’s like it!”

Had he been seventy, standing with his back to a fire in a London Club, he could not have been more authoritative or self-possessed.

“Don’t bother the gentleman,” this from Maria Jane — her name must have been Maria Jane.

“He isn’t bothering me; come around on the other side so you can see how I do it.”

“You come on Marster ‘Arry, or I’ll ——”

“Where does he live?” I interrupted, addressing the flowing streamers.

“‘Cross the way, sir.”

“Leave the little fellow with me — I’ll take care of him.”

Evins now joined us; he had already backed the taxi out of the line of my perspective, and upon seeing the crowd had sidled up to lend a hand.

The boy took him in with a single glance.

“I wouldn’t go round in one of those motor cars,” he said,

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"if I were you, that does nothing but eat up the tuppences whether you ride or not — you can hear it now. First thing you know it's ten bob."

"Harry! come here this minute!" rang out a voice from a second story-window opposite.

The little fellow looked up, and a shadow fell across his face.

"I'll have to cut it. Nurse don't count, and half the time I don't mind, but *that's my aunt*" — his voice rising in emphasis — "Good-bye; thanks awfully," and he was gone.

He was the grandson, no doubt, of one of those little fellows whom Thackeray loved to pat on the head. Instantly my memory went back to Charles Dickens's tribute.

"He had a particular delight in boys," he says, "and an excellent way with them. I remember his once asking me, with fantastic gravity, when he had been to Eton where my eldest son then was, whether I felt as he did in regard to never seeing a boy without wanting instantly to give him a sovereign? I thought of this when I looked down into his grave after he was laid there, for I looked down into it over the shoulders of a boy to whom he had been kind."

For the differences between the two great authors had been healed a short time before Thackeray's death. They had not spoken for some years, because of a criticism on Mr. Thackeray made by Mr. Edmund Yates, which Mr. Thackeray resented, the Garrick Club sustaining him. The whole sad correspondence is before me as I write. All of his letters to Yates, to Mr. Dickens, and to the Committee

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of the Garrick, are dated from this same No. 36 Onslow Square, and all of them, no doubt, penned in that same room over the porch where Hodder fifty years ago took his dictation. And, too, within fifty feet of the window from which Harry's determined and ever-to-be obeyed aunt called her small nephew to her side.



CHAPTER VII
JERMYN STREET

CHAPTER VII

JERMYN STREET

ON THIS June morning — and there can be lovely days in England, days when Nature says: “Yes, I am sorry; I have treated you rather badly all winter, but now for a sample of what I can do to make it up to you” — on this June morning, then, Jermyn Street was seen at its best — one of the few picturesque mid-city streets really left in London. Its narrowness helped and so did the burst of green from out St. James’s Yard which hung over the asphalt, and so did the quiet corner of the old church itself — one of Christopher Wren’s.

And yet the street had its drawbacks. One of them — and this to me was most humiliating — was the discovery that while I had been treated with becoming respect in most of my wanderings over London, that here, in the once most famous quarter of the town — the resort of the best bred, most courteous and most illustrious men of England — I was received with marked distrust because of my trade. A man who sits in a taxi, with an easel on the front seat, and his fingers black as a chimney sweep’s, is really no better than a patent-medicine vendor who cries out the virtues of his nostrums from the top of a soap box, or the fakir

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who sells tooth wash, patent stovelid lifters, or china-mending cement from behind a push-cart.

To-day — and I blush to tell it — I was ordered off Jermyn Street. Told to “move on” — to evaporate into thin air. Not by a minion of the law, which would have been bearable, but by a plain, well-to-do, matter-of-fact citizen who said that it was his busy day and that my taxi and I were in the way of numbers of carriage customers who bought their hats and caps in his shop, and that he would call the police—or words to that effect—if I delayed my activities an instant.

He had come into view by this time — I could see him below my canvas, as he stood gesticulating on the sidewalk. A large, florid person, in white spats, checked trousers, double-breasted waistcoat, and spectacles. He was also bald, and had muttonchop side-whiskers.

And he was very positive.

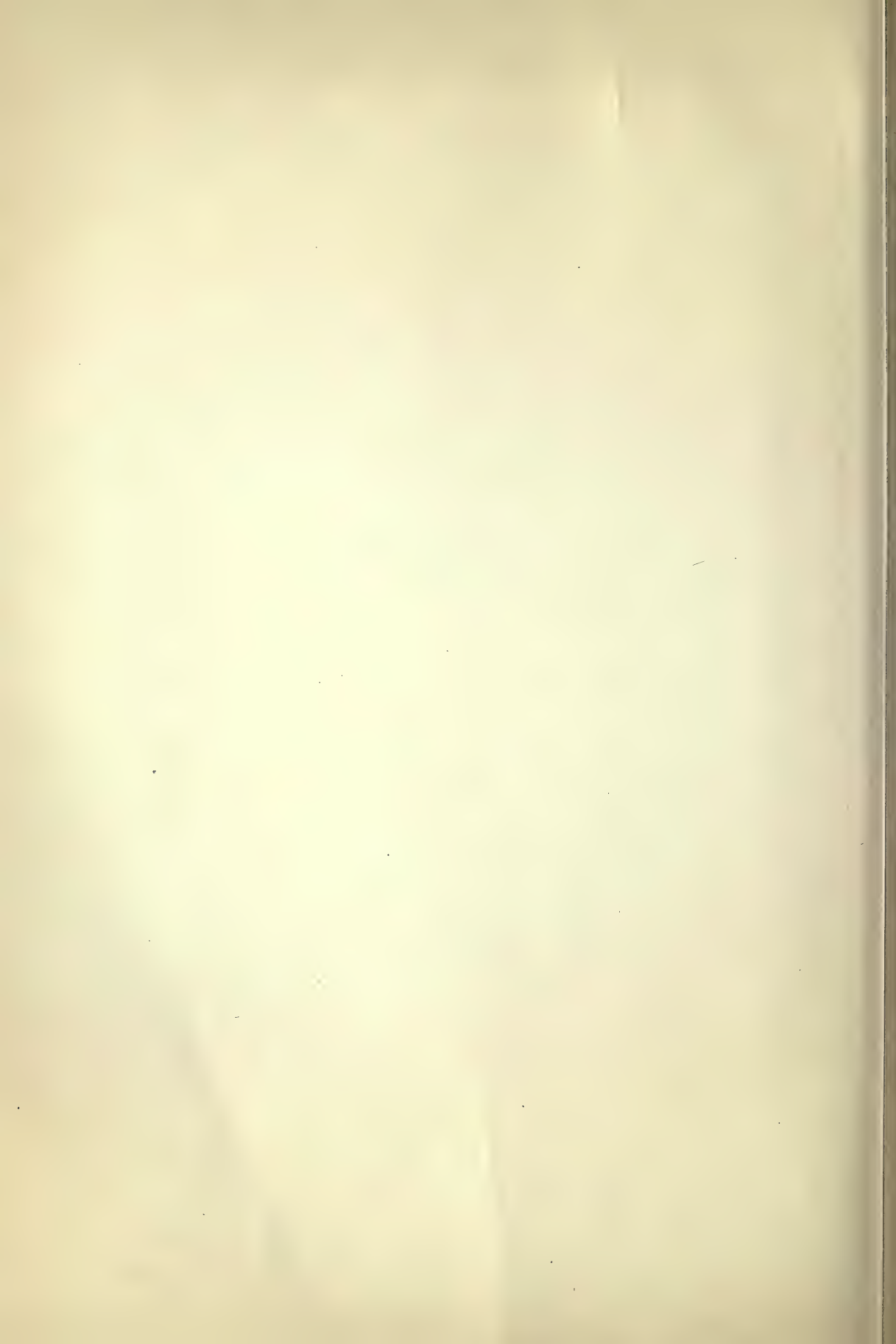
I began at his spats, and, in conciliatory terms, addressed him, all the way up his fat body, until I reached his irate face, and then, as was my custom with obdurate and not-to-be pacified persons, turned him over to Evins, and resumed my work: A line of beautiful carts, loaded with enchanting bricks, hauled by adorable horses dragging great bunches of hair tied to their fetlocks, had stopped for a moment in my right-hand foreground, the whole accentuating a necessary high light, and there was no time to be lost.

Evins advanced under heavy fire, deployed to the left, and opened within a few inches of the enemy.

There came a rattling fire of expletives, the bursting



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of an oath charged with dynamite — (hats and caps set it off) — a closer knitting of the crowd, and I was about to waive my paint rag in surrender, when a fat man in a white apron forced his way to my side.

"This 'ere carriage comp'ny be blowed!" he cried. "He don't hev none — and won't to-day cause it's Saturday. If ye want to move yer taxi in front of my door, Guvnor, ye can and welcome. I keep this public," and he pointed to a barroom ten feet farther along the sidewalk, "and if ye say what'll ye hev, I'll bring it out to ye."

Both sides ceased firing.

Evins stepped up and saluted.

"This is a friend of mine, sir — very perticular friend. I'll move her if ye don't mind," and he slid in behind the steering wheel. "How's that? Can ye see all right? Some o' these here one and six fellows put on more airs than a Lord Mayor." All of which leads me to believe that the manners of those now living on Jermyn Street have more or less degenerated since the days when Henry Jermyn, Earl of St. Albans, laid out the roadway in 1667.

For great and distinguished people — sometimes in periwigs, sometimes in knee breeches — have taken the air up and down these narrow sidewalks. Colonel Churchill (afterward the great Duke of Marlborough); Gray the poet; Sir Isaac Newton; Sir Walter Scott, who was seized with his last illness at No. 76 (now Turkish Baths); Sydney Smith, who occupied No. 81, as well as Secretary Craggs, Addison's friend, who died here in 1721.

And then there was Mr. William Makepeace Thackeray, than whom no finer gentleman ever put foot on sole leather,



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that he jocularly expressed himself willing to sign an agreement for life upon these terms."

And here upon Jermyn Street, if I may be permitted in such company, no less a person than the worthy scribe himself may always be found, whenever he is in London, at his friend Jules's, opposite Prince's.

Here, too, lived Colonel Newcome and Bobbachy Bawhawder, whose adventures are chronicled in "The Lion Huntress of Belgravia," as well as "Henry Esmond" and many others.

I quote from "Esmond," not only because Addison comes into the narrative, but because I have a strong conviction, after looking the ground over, that the hat and cap shop, occupied by the gentleman in spats, covers the site of the bookstore referred to in the text.

"Quitting the Guard-table one Sunday afternoon, when by chance Dick had a sober fit upon him, he and his friend (Henry Esmond) were making their way down Germain Street, and Dick all of a sudden left his companion's arm, and ran after a gentleman who was poring over a folio volume at the bookshop near to St. James's church. . . .

"'Harry Esmond, come hither,' cries out Dick. 'Thou hast heard me talk over and over again of my dearest Joe, my guardian angel?'

"'Indeed,' says Mr. Esmond, with a bow, 'it is not from you only that I have learnt to admire Mr. Addison. We loved good poetry at Cambridge as well as at Oxford; and I have some of yours by heart, though I have put on a red coat.' . . . "O qui canoro blandius Orptheo vocale ducis carmen;" shall I go on, sir?' says Mr. Esmond, who,

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indeed, had read and loved the charming Latin poems of Mr. Addison, as every scholar of that time knew and admired them.

“‘This is Captain Esmond who was at Blenheim,’ says Steele.

“‘Lieutenant Esmond,’ says the other, with a low bow, ‘at Mr. Addison’s service.’

“‘I have heard of you,’ says Mr. Addison, with a smile; as, indeed, everybody about town. . . .

“‘We were going to the “George” to take a bottle before the play,’ says Steele: ‘wilt thou be one, Joe?’

‘Mr. Addison said his lodgings were hard by, where he was still rich enough to give a good bottle of wine to his friends; and invited the two gentlemen to his apartment in the Haymarket, whither we accordingly went.

“‘I shall get credit with my landlady,’ says he, with a smile, ‘when she sees two such fine gentlemen as you come up my stair.’ And he politely made his visitors welcome to his apartment, which was indeed but a shabby one, though no grandee of the land could receive his guests with a more perfect and courtly grace than this gentleman. A frugal dinner, consisting of a slice of meat and a penny loaf, was awaiting the owner of the lodgings. ‘My wine is better than my meat,’ says Mr. Addison; ‘my Lord Halifax sent me the burgundy.’”

But all these fine old days have passed, and so have the fine gentlemen, young and old, who made them notable. We have barrooms now in Jermyn Street, with swinging glass doors, and fishmongers’ stalls, with raw salmon and huge crabs stretched out on zinc-covered tables, or con-

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fined in yellow ice; hotels with lifts; haberdashers' windows filled with shirts and neckties, to say nothing of hat and cap establishments whose owners storm up and down their sidewalks treating poor, but honest, painters with the same contempt and insolence that they would a peddler.



CHAPTER VIII
BERKELEY SQUARE



CHAPTER VIII

BERKELEY SQUARE

NO SUCH changes have fallen upon this — the court end of the town, since it was laid out in the middle of the eighteenth century under Robert Walpole, then Prime Minister. At No. 11, so the records show, lived his son Horace — chiefly from 1779 to 1797; at No. 13 the Marquis of Hertford began to collect what is now the Wallace Collection; at No. 25 lived Charles James Fox; at No. 28 Lord Brougham entertained as Lord Chancellor; at No. 38 Lady Jersey's dinners and balls were the talk of the town; at No. 45 Lord Clive committed suicide in 1774, and in the corner house on Bruton Street Colly Cibber lived and died.

In fact, many houses of the period are still identified by these names, and some of them have the iron torch-extinguishers hanging at their doorposts. And even at this late day the carriage of his Majesty the King can be found outside the stoops of the great people whose doors open on the Square.

That which drew me to it was the fact that on this very square was set up one of the most brilliant booths in all Vanity Fair.

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"All the world knows that Lord Steyne's town palace stands in Gaunt Square, out of which Great Gaunt Street leads, whither we first conducted Rebecca in the time of the departed Sir Pitt Crawley. Peering over the railings and through the black trees into the garden of the square, you see a few miserable governesses with wan-faced pupils wandering round and round it, and round the dreary grass-plot in the centre of which rises the statue of Lord Gaunt, who fought at Minden, in a three-tailed wig, and otherwise habited like a Roman Emperor. Gaunt House occupies nearly a side of the square. The remaining three sides are composed of mansions that have passed away into dowagerism; tall, dark houses, with window frames of stone, or picked out of a lighter red. Little light seems to be behind those lean, comfortless casements now; and hospitality to have passed away from those doors as much as the laced lacqueys and link-boys of old times, who used to put out their torches in the blank iron extinguishers that still flank the lamps over the steps. Brass plates have penetrated into the Square — doctors, the Diddlesex Bank, Western Branch — the English and European Reunion, etc. — it has a dreary look — nor is my Lord Steyne's palace less dreary. All I have ever seen of it is the vast wall in front, with the rustic columns at the great gate, through which an old porter peers sometimes with a fat and gloomy red face — and over the wall the garret and bedroom windows, and the chimneys, out of which there seldom comes any smoke now."

While there is some conflict over the exact location of this noble mansion, all authorities agree that Gaunt Square was



BERKELEY SQUARE

Alfred J. Smith



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really Berkeley Square, and that Great Gaunt Street is none other than the Hill Street of to-day — a little street which according to Mr. Thackeray himself runs east of the park, halfway up the hill, as can be seen in my sketch. I therefore pin my faith to the word of the man who should have known best. Certainly, there can be no question that the blackened old relic on the left of my drawing is of the period; nor can there be any doubt of its spaciousness and aristocratic bearing and dignity. On its rails, too, there still can be found “black iron extinguishers” which the link-boys used, and from one of whose torches Rawdon Crawley lit his cigar the night he and Wenham left this same porch together.

And so I had Evins manœuvre his taxi until the overhanging trees shaded my canvas, my eye on Hill Street as well as the great house on my left. Indeed, from no other part of the Square can there be seen, in conjunction with Hill Street, a mansion big and pretentious enough to have housed so distinguished an aristocrat. That His Imperial Majesty King George had dined the night before with Lord Rosebery, whose house is near the top of the hill (and Evins confirmed it from the morning paper he was reading), was interesting of course, although I had not been invited, but not half so interesting to me as identifying the town palace in which Mistress Becky Sharp was entertained on the night of her triumph, when she was “introduced to the best of company.”

She would have left her Rawdon “at home, but that virtue ordained that her husband should be by her side to protect the timid and fluttering little creature on her first appearance in polite society.”

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"Lord Steyne stepped forward, taking her hand, and greeting her with great courtesy, and presenting her to Lady Steyne, and their ladyships, her daughters. Their ladyships made three stately courtesies, and the elder lady to be sure gave her hand to the newcomer, but it was as cold and lifeless as marble.

"Becky took it, however, with grateful humility; and performing a reverence which would have done credit to the best dancing master, put herself at Lady Steyne's feet, as it were, by saying that his lordship had been her father's earliest friend and patron, and that she, Becky, had learned to honour and respect the Steyne family from the days of her childhood. The fact is, that Lord Steyne had once purchased a couple of pictures of the late Sharp, and the affectionate orphan could never forget her gratitude for that favour.

"The Lady Bareacres then came under Becky's cognizance — to whom the colonel's lady made also a most respectful obeisance; it was returned with severe dignity by the exalted person in question.

"'I had the pleasure of making your ladyship's acquaintance at Brussels, ten years ago,' Becky said, in her most winning manner. 'I had the good fortune to meet Lady Bareacres at the Duchess of Richmond's ball, the night before the battle of Waterloo. And I recollect your ladyship, and my Lady Blanche, your daughter, sitting in the carriage in the *porte-cochere* at the Inn, waiting for horses. I hope your ladyship's diamonds are safe.'" . . .

"But it was when the ladies were alone that Becky knew the tug of war would come. And then indeed the little

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woman found herself in such a situation, as made her acknowledge the correctness of Lord Steyne's caution to her to beware of the society of ladies above her own sphere. As they say the persons who hate Irishmen most are Irishmen: so, assuredly, the greatest tyrants over women are women. When poor little Becky, alone with the ladies, went up to the fireplace whither the great ladies had repaired, the great ladies marched away and took possession of a table of drawings. When Becky followed them to the table of drawings, they dropped off one by one to the fire again. She tried to speak to one of the children (of whom she was commonly fond in public places), but Master George Gaunt was called away by his mamma; and the stranger was treated with such cruelty finally, that even Lady Steyne herself pitied her and went up to speak to the friendless little woman.

“‘Lord Steyne,’ said her ladyship, as her wan cheeks glowed with a blush, ‘says you sing and play very beautifully, Mrs. Crawley. I wish you would do me the kindness to sing to me.’

“‘I will do anything that may give pleasure to my Lord Steyne or to you,’ said Rebecca, sincerely grateful, and seating herself at the piano began to sing.

“She sang religious songs of Mozart, which had been early favourites of Lady Steyne, and with such sweetness and tenderness that the lady, lingering round the piano, sat down by its side and listened until the tears rolled down her eyes. It is true that the opposition ladies at the other end of the room kept up a loud and ceaseless buzzing and talking, but the Lady Steyne did not hear those rumours. She was

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a child again — and had wandered back through a forty years' wilderness to her Convent Garden. The chapel organ had pealed the same tones, the organist, the sister whom she loved best of the community, had taught them to her in those early happy days. She was a girl once more, and the brief period of her happiness bloomed out again for an hour — she started when the jarring doors were flung open, and with a loud laugh from Lord Steyne, the men of the party entered full of gaiety.

“He saw at a glance what had happened in his absence, and was grateful to his wife for once. He went and spoke to her and called her by her Christian name, so as again to bring blushes to her pale face. ‘My wife says you have been singing like an angel,’ he said to Becky. Now there are angels of two kinds, and both sorts, it is said, are charming in their way.

“Whatever the previous portion of the evening had been, the rest of that night was a great triumph for Becky. She sang her very best, and it was so good that every one of the men came and crowded round the piano. The women, her enemies, were left quite alone. And Mr. Paul Jefferson Jones thought he had made a conquest of Lady Gaunt by going up to her ladyship and praising her delightful friend's first-rate singing.”

It was at the close of another great rout at Gaunt House — poor Rawdon Crawley having put his little Becky into her carriage — that he and Mr. Wenham lighted their cigars from the torch of a link-boy, and strolled off together, followed by two persons.

“When they had walked down Gaunt Square a few score

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of paces, one of the men came up, and touching Rawdon on the shoulder, said, 'Beg your pardon, Colonel, I wish to speak to you most particular.' This gentleman's acquaintance gave a loud whistle as the latter spoke, at which signal a cab came clattering up from those stationed at the gate of Gaunt House — and the aide-de-camp ran round and placed himself in front of Colonel Crawley.

"That gallant officer at once knew what had befallen him. He was in the hands of the bailiffs."

We all know the results. How Jane (Lady Crawley) came to Rawdon's rescue in the Sponging House, and how, after Mr. Moss, the bailiff, had been satisfied, Becky's husband, his eyes running over with gratitude, had sought his own home once more.

But let Mr. Thackeray tell it:

"Rawdon left her and walked home rapidly. It was nine o'clock at night. He ran across the streets, and the great squares of Vanity Fair, and at length came up breathless opposite his own house. He started back and fell against the railings, trembling as he looked up. The drawing-room windows were blazing with light. She had said that she was in bed and ill. He stood there for some time, the light from the rooms on his pale face.

"He took out his door-key and let himself into the house. He could hear laughter in the upper rooms. He was in the ball dress in which he had been captured the night before. He went silently up the stairs, leaning against the banisters at the stairhead. Nobody was stirring in the house besides — all the servants had been sent away. Rawdon heard laughter within, laughter and singing. Becky was singing

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a snatch of the song of the night before; a hoarse voice shouted 'Bravo! Bravo!' — it was Lord Steyne's.

"Rawdon opened the door and went in. A little table with a dinner was laid out — and wine and plate. Steyne was hanging over the sofa on which Becky sat. The wretched woman was in brilliant full toilet, her arms and all her fingers sparkling with bracelets and rings, and the brilliants on her breast which Steyne had given her. He had her hand in his, and was bowing over it to kiss it, when Becky started up with a faint scream as she caught sight of Rawdon's white face. At the next instant she tried to smile, a horrid smile, as if to welcome her husband, and Steyne rose up, grinding his teeth, pale, and with fury in his looks

"He, too, attempted a laugh — and came forward holding out his hand. 'What, come back! How d'ye do, Crawley?' he said, the nerves of his mouth twitching as he tried to grin at the intruder.

"There was that in Rawdon's face which caused Becky to fling herself before him. 'I am innocent, Rawdon,' she said; 'before God, I am innocent.' She clung hold of his coat, of his hands; her own were all covered with serpents, and rings, and baubles. 'I am innocent. Say I am innocent,' she said to Lord Steyne.

"He thought a trap had been laid for him and was as furious with the wife as with the husband. 'You innocent! Damn you,' he screamed out. 'You innocent! Why every trinket you have on your body is paid for by me. I have given you thousands of pounds which this fellow has spent, and for which he has sold you. Innocent, by ——! You're as innocent as your mother, the ballet-girl, and your hus-

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band the bully. Don't think to frighten me as you have done others. Make way, sir, and let me pass;' and Lord Steyne seized up his hat, and, with flame in his eyes, and looking his enemy fiercely in the face, marched upon him, never for a moment doubting that the other would give way.

"But Rawdon Crawley, springing out, seized him by the neckcloth, until Steyne, almost strangled, writhed, and bent under his arm. 'You lie, you dog,' said Rawdon. 'You lie, you coward and villain!' And he struck the peer twice over the face with his open hand, and flung him bleeding to the ground. It was all done before Rebecca could interpose. She stood there trembling before him. She admired her husband, strong, brave, and victorious.

"'Come here,' he said. She came up at once.

"'Take off those things.' She began, trembling, pulling the jewels from her arms, and the rings from her shaking fingers, and held them all in a heap, quivering and looking up at him.

"'Throw them down,' he said, and she dropped them. He tore the diamond ornament out of her breast, and flung it at Lord Steyne. It cut him on his bald forehead. Steyne wore the scar to his dying day."

Fine writing this; unsurpassed by any man of his time — or any other, some enthusiasts say. So thought Hayward of the *Edinburgh Review* in a criticism on "Vanity Fair," printed in 1848, when he said: "At this moment the rising generation are supplied with the best of their mental aliment by writers whose names are a dead letter to the

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mass, and among the most remarkable of these is Michael Angelo Titmarsh, alias William Makepeace Thackeray."

And so thought Charlotte Bronte who in 1847 wrote:

"Why have I alluded to this man? I have alluded to him, reader, because I think I see in him an intellect profounder and more unique than his contemporaries have yet recognized; because I regard him as the first social regenerator of the day — as the very master of that working corps who would restore to rectitude the warped system of things; because I think no commentator on his writings has yet found the comparison that suits him, the terms which rightly characterize his talent. They say he is like Fielding: they talk of his wit, humour, comic powers. He resembles Fielding as an eagle does a vulture; Fielding could stoop on carrion, but Thackeray never does. His wit is bright, his humour attractive, but both bear the same relation to his serious genius that the mere lambent sheet-lightning playing under the edge of the summer cloud does to the electric death-spark hid in its womb."

And so thought Mr. Thackeray himself, modest as he always was, and often disheartened over his work. "Down on your knees, you rogue," he once said to James T. Fields, when the two stood in front of the author's home. "Down on your knees, I say, for here 'Vanity Fair' was penned; and I will go down with you for I have a high opinion of that little production myself."

And later on (I am still quoting Fields), when

"A friend congratulated him once on that touch in 'Vanity Fair' in which Becky *admires* her husband when he is giving Steyne the punishment which ruins *her* for life.

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'Well,' he said, 'when I wrote that sentence, I slapped my fist on the table, and said, "That is a touch of genius."'"

Sixty-five years ago all this and since then the reading world has confirmed the spoken and written word of the author's time, and the praise and appreciation will continue as long as our language exists.

All of which accounts for the fact that in June, 1912, I am sitting in a taxi under the over-arching trees of Berkeley Square, working away like mad on a charcoal sketch of what I choose to call the very house in which the immortal Becky and some of the other puppets in *Vanity Fair* danced to the music of their Masters' genius.



CHAPTER IX
ST. GEORGE'S CHURCH
HANOVER SQUARE



CHAPTER IX
ST. GEORGE'S CHURCH
HANOVER SQUARE

THERE is a wedding in this famous old church this June morning — a morning filled with tears and sunshine — for it rains and clears up every fifteen minutes. I watch the carriages drive up, huge boutonières in the lapels of the drivers, their whips tied with ribbons, and from my vantage ground on the back seat of my taxi I get the shimmer of silk and lace, sombre black coats, and white shirt-fronts.

Two lines of spectators fringing the carpet conceal the bride and her maids of honour, as they trip from their equipages under umbrellas, for there is no awning as is usual with us. Then come the muffled strains of the organ, and later on the party emerge, again are swallowed up in the various cabs and carriages, and are whirled away, and the two lines of spectators melt together — the women and children helping themselves to the flowers scattered over the rain-soaked carpet and porch.

In half an hour another party drives up — and the same scene is enacted, except, perhaps, that this second bride catches the sunshine in her face, whilst the lace and orange

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blossoms of the first were spattered with rain-drops — and so the game goes on. Five weddings a day in St. George's, Hanover Square, is about the average in the season, and June marks its height.

If I have read my "Newcomes" aright, little has been changed here since that other morning in June 18 —, except, perhaps, that the costumes and appointments of the contracting parties are less elaborate, and the social eminence of their guests less exalted.

Indeed few weddings of the day have ever surpassed that of Barnes Newcome and Lady Clara Pulleyn.

"Finer flounces, finer bonnets, more lovely wreaths, more beautiful lace, smarter carriages, bigger white bows, larger footmen, were not seen, during all the season of 18 —, than appeared round about St. George's, Hanover Square, in the beautiful month of June succeeding that September when so many of our friends, the Newcomes, were assembled at Baden. Those flaunting carriages, powdered and favoured footmen, were in attendance upon members of the Newcome family and their connections, who were celebrating what is called a marriage in high life in the temple within. Shall we set down a catalogue of the dukes, marquises, earls, who were present, cousins of the lovely bride? . . . Lady Clara Pulleyn, the lovely and accomplished daughter of the Earl and Countess of Dorking; of the beautiful bridesmaids, the Ladies Henrietta Belinda Adelaide Pulleyn, Miss Newcome, Miss Alice Newcome, Miss Maude Newcome, Miss Anna Maria (Hobson) Newcome; and all the other persons engaged in the ceremony. It was performed by the Right Honourable and Right Reverend Viscount Gal-

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lowglass, Bishop of Ballyshannon, brother-in-law to the bride, assisted by the Honourable and Reverend Hercules O'Grady, his lordship's chaplain, and the Reverend John Bulders, rector of St. Mary's Newcome."

From among the throngs of lookers on, had I had the heart I could, no doubt, myself, have picked out that:

"Woman of vulgar appearance and disorderly aspect, accompanied by two scared children, who took no part in the disorder occasioned by their mother's proceeding, except by their tears and outcries to augment the disquiet," and who "made her appearance in one of the pews of the church, was noted there by persons in the vestry, was requested to retire by a beadle, and was finally induced to quit the sacred precincts of the building by the very strongest persuasion of a couple of policemen; X and Y laughed at one another, and nodded their heads knowingly as the poor wretch, with her whimpering boys, was led away. They understood very well who the personage was who had come to disturb the matrimonial ceremony; it did not commence until Mrs. De Lacy (as this lady chose to be called) had quitted this temple of Hymen. She slunk through the throng of emblazoned carriages, and the press of footmen arrayed as splendidly as Solomon in his glory. John jeered at Thomas, William turned his powdered head, and signalled Jeames, who answered with a corresponding grin, as the woman, with sobs, and wild imprecations, and frantic appeals, made her way through the splendid crowd, escorted by her aides-de-camp in blue."

Such tragedies, no doubt, are of common occurrence within the portals of St. George, and if one were in search

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of material for a book, instead of line and mass for a picture, he could hardly do better than hang around this famous old Church, and study the faces that come and go.

Evins had his opinions, and did not hesitate to express them.

"Some on 'em will wish they hadn't never seen the place before they're five year older, sir. I took a young chit of a girl and her mother to them steps last winter, both on 'em rigged out amazin', and a man old enough to be her grandfather was waitin' for her, and blame me if the two didn't stand up together and were married right 'fore my eyes, for I left my car across the street and went in, thinkin' somethin' was goin' to happen, and it did.

"They come out together, and the two, seein' I was not by the curb, called to one of our drivers and got in, leavin' the mother on the stoop, and up comes a young fellow with his eyes a blazin' and shakes his fist in her face, and says, 'It's all your fault,' and while I was wonderin' what was up, he shoved her into a four-wheeler and jumped in himself, and I didn't even get my fare. What do you think o' that, sir? And so I say it would be better if some of these loon-atics stayed at home."

When the last touch had been put on my sketch, I directed Evins to run the car to the entrance of the Church that I might get a closer and more detailed view of what had heretofore been but a mass of broken grays against a luminous sky.

The débris of the last wedding were still to be seen; the carpet had been rolled back, to be unrolled again when the



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next arrival required it, but the crushed roses, bits of smilax, and scattered grains of rice, were still visible.

I passed inside and walked to the rail, where so many couples had been sentenced for life to either happiness or misery. It was not difficult to pick out the exact spot where Barnes Newcome and Lady Clara had stood, nor was it difficult to repeople the now deserted Church with the gray throng.

We know what happened in her own and Jack Belsize's case. How the heart-broken lover disappeared immediately after the ceremony and wandered over the continent. How:

"It was said he had broken the bank at Homburg last autumn; had been heard of during the winter at Milan, Venice, and Vienna; and when, a few months after the marriage of Barnes Newcome and Lady Clara, Jack's elder brother died, and he himself became the next in succession to the title and estates of Highgate, many folks said it was a pity little Barney's marriage had taken place so soon."

As for Barnes Newcome and his share in the comedy, it is best told in the talk that that distinguished banker and member of Parliament, now Sir Barnes Newcome, had with Lady Kew:

"I want you to send Clara and the children to Newcome. They ought to go, sir; that is why I sent for you; to tell you that. Have you been quarrelling as much as usual? 'I didn't come to hear this, ma'am,' says Barnes, livid with rage.

"'You struck her, you know you did, Sir Barnes New-

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come. She rushed over to me last year on the night you did it, you know she did.'

"Great God, ma'am. You know the provocation,' screams Barnes.

"Provocation or not, I don't say. But from that moment she has beat you. You fool, to write her a letter and ask her pardon! If I had been a man, I would rather have strangled my wife than have humiliated myself so before her. She will never forgive that blow.'

"I was mad when I did it; and she drove me mad,' says Barnes. 'She has the temper of a fiend and the ingenuity of the devil. In two years an entire change has come over her. If I had used a knife to her I should not have been surprised. But it is not with you to reproach me about Clara. Your ladyship found her for me.'"

As to Lady Clara, was it any wonder that the customary thing happened, as we gather from the pages of the text? How on one occasion Jack Belsize, now Lord Highgate, who sat next to her at dinner, was "whispering all the while into her ringlets." How, later on, in the cloak room at Lady Ann's mansion during a great ball there "sits Lady Clara Newcome, with a gentleman bending over her just in such an attitude as the bride is, in Hogarth's 'Marriage à la Mode,' as the counsellor talks to her. Lady Clara starts up, as a crowd of blushes come into her wan face, and tries to smile, and rises to greet my wife, and says something about it being so dreadfully hot in the upper rooms, and so very tedious waiting for the carriages. The gentleman advances toward me with a military stride, and says, 'How do you do, Mr. Pendennis? How's our young

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friend, the painter?' I answer Lord Highgate civilly enough, whereas my wife will scarce speak a word in reply to Lady Clara Newcome."

And then the summing up: after Lady Clara's and Lord Highgate's elopement.

"Does the Right Reverend Prelate who did the benedictory business for Barnes and Clara, his wife, repent in secret? Do the parents who pressed the marriage, and the fine folks who signed the book, and ate the breakfast, and applauded the bridegroom's speech, feel a little ashamed? O Hymen Hymenæe! The bishops, beadles, clergy, pew openers, and other officers of the temple dedicated to Heaven under the invocation of St. George, will officiate in the same place at scores and scores more of such marriages; and St. George of England may behold virgin after virgin offered up to the devouring monster Mammon (with many most respectable female dragons looking on) — may see virgin after virgin given away, just as in the Soldan of Babylon's time, but with never a champion to come to the rescue!"

As I closed the book — I had brought it with me into the church that I might study it the more quietly — I could not banish from my mind the glimpse of the life of to-day which Evins had given me, wondering whether after all more than one plot and four characters were ever needed in staging the domestic tragedies of our own, or of any other time: the girl, the woman who sold her, the man who bought her, and that other man whom she loves, and who, having stolen her heart, straightway steals her body.



CHAPTER X
THE REFORM CLUB



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THE REFORM CLUB

MR. THEODORE TAYLOR'S delightful volume, "Thackeray the Humourist and the Man of Letters," published in 1864 — a year after the great novelist's death — gives Thackeray's clubs as the Reform, the Athenæum, and the Garrick, adding that the afternoons of the last week of his life were almost entirely passed at the Reform, and that during all of that time he had never been more genial or in such apparently happy moods. Many of his brother members have, since his death, recalled to each other one of the tenderest passages among his early sketches — "Brown the younger at a Club" — in which the old uncle, while showing his nephew the various rooms of the club, is represented as recalling memories of men — whose names now appeared at the end of the club list under the dismal category of "Members Deceased," in which (added Thackeray), "You and I shall rank some day."

Mr. Taylor quotes also from Mr. Shirley Brooks, in his account of the last occasion on which the latter saw Mr. Thackeray at the Garrick Club, only eight days before his death. "On that evening, he enjoyed himself much, in his own quiet way, and contributed genially to the enjoy-

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ment of those who were something less quiet; and, a question arising about a subscription in aid of a disabled artist, he instantly offered to increase, if necessary, a sum he had previously promised. The writer's very last recollection of the 'cynic,' therefore, is in connexion with an unasked act of Christian kindness. On the following Monday he attended the funeral of a lady who was interred in Kensal Green Cemetery. On the Tuesday evening he came to his favourite club — the Garrick — and asked a seat at the table of two friends, who, of course, welcomed him as all welcomed Thackeray. It will not be deemed too minute a record by any of the hundreds who personally loved him to note where he sat for the last time in that club. There is in the dining-room on the first floor a nook near the reading room. The principal picture hanging in that nook, and fronting you as you approach it, is the celebrated one from 'The Clandestine Marriage,' with Lord Ogleby, Canton, and Brush. Opposite to that Thackeray took his seat and dined with his friends. He was afterward in the smoking room, a place in which he delighted. The Garrick Club will remove in a few months, and all these details will be nothing to its new members, but much to many of its old ones. His place there will know him and them no more. On the Wednesday he was out several times, and was seen in Palace Gardens 'reading a book.' Before the dawn on Thursday, he was where there is no night."

Dickens had a still later glimpse of him at the Athenæum. "I saw him . . ." he says, "shortly before Christmas at the Athenæum, when he told me that he had been in bed three days, that after those attacks he was troubled with

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cold shiverings which quite took the power of work out of him, and that he had it in his mind to try a new remedy, which he laughingly described. He was very cheerful and looked very bright."

These three clubs — the Reform, the Garrick, and the Athenæum — were the ones he loved best. There were other resorts that welcomed him — the Cock, in Fleet Street, and the London Tavern, within whose hospitable oak-panelled walls he and his friends and admirers enjoyed a memorable dinner.

"Covers were laid for sixty" (I still quote from Mr. Taylor's book), "and sixty and no more sat down precisely at the minute named to do honour to the great novelist. Sixty very hearty shakes of the hand did Thackeray receive from sixty friends on that occasion; and hearty cheers from sixty vociferous and friendly tongues followed the chairman's, Mr. Charles Dickens, proposal of his health, and of wishes for his speedy and successful return among us. Dickens — the best after-dinner speaker now alive — was never happier. He spoke as if he was fully conscious that it was a great occasion, and that the absence of even one reporter was a matter of congratulation, affording ampler room to unbend. The table was in the shape of a horseshoe having two vice-chairmen; and this circumstance was wrought up and played with by Dickens in the true Sam Weller and Charles Dickens manner. Thackeray, who is far from what is called a good speaker, outdid himself. There was his usual hesitation; but this hesitation becomes his manner of speaking and his matter, and is never unpleasant to his hearers,

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though it is, we are assured, most irksome to himself. This speech was full of pathos, and humour, and oddity, with bits of prepared parts imperfectly recollected, but most happily made good by the felicities of the passing moment. It was a speech to remember for its earnestness of purpose and its undoubted originality. Then the chairman quitted, and many, near and at a distance, quitted with him. Thackeray was on the move with the chairman, when, inspired by the moment, Jerrold took the chair, and Thackeray remained. Who is to chronicle what now passed? — what passages of wit — what neat and pleasant sarcastic speeches in proposing healths — what varied and pleasant, ay, and at times, sarcastic acknowledgments? Up to the time when Dickens left, a good reporter might have given all, and with ease, to future ages; but there could be no reporting what followed. There were words too nimble and too full of flame for a dozen Gurneys, all ears, to catch and preserve. Few will forget that night. There was an 'air of wit' about the room for three days after."

It was the Reform Club which he had gladdened by his presence the week of his death that now loomed up before me out of the fog and smoke — a great, square, sullen mass of granite divided from the Carleton Club by a narrow alley as is seen in my sketch.

It looks forbidding enough outside, frowning at you from under its heavy browed windows — an aloof, stately, cold and unwelcome sort of place. Inside, it may be more cheerful and more friendly; a London coal fire, an English easy chair — and there are none better, or more comfortable — and a low reading lamp, may take some of the chill off.



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Then again, one may be spoken to now and then by some other lost soul, hungry for companionship, but I doubt it. I am not going to scold. It is racial, perhaps, and the island is so small that it is dangerous to rub elbows against everybody, but I cannot, all the same, quite smother my feelings. My own clubs are scattered from Boston to Washington, with a few out West, and often as I prowls about London alone, and look up into the faces of the windows of these mausoleums, wondering what sort of men are behind them, I cannot help recalling the cozy corners of mine at home, into which are welcomed hundreds of strangers from all over the globe, and with a heartiness and sincerity that sets them to thinking. Some of them pinch themselves in amazement, wondering whether they are really awake. Yes, it must be racial; or, perhaps, the chill of countless fogs has gotten into their bones.

And with this came the thought: What a godsend Mr. Thackeray must have been to many within its walls, and how the warmth of his geniality must have helped to thaw out that peculiar chilly reserve which in many really fine, hearty, and ready-to-be-kind Englishmen, is due neither to rudeness nor to class distinction, but simply, strange as it may appear, to innate shyness.

The blast of a siren clearing the way for a taxi which pulled up on the right at the Carlton, unloading an important personage whom Evins told me was a member of Parliament, awoke me from my reverie. The blast was intended for me, my being anchored in the middle of the unloading space reserved for the elect being nothing short of an outrage. The upholstered porter — mostly in red — was evidently of

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this opinion, and expressed it in a concentrated glower. Evins had opinions of his own; I saw that from the way his mouth straightened — quite as it did that morning off Staple Inn.

“Are we in the way, Evins?” I asked.

“No, sir, we ain’t; and if we was it wouldn’t make no difference. Them stuffs in gold lace think they own the earth.”

CHAPTER XI
COVENT GARDEN



CHAPTER XI

COVENT GARDEN

WHEN describing some highly convivial scene, Thackeray generally places his characters in one of the quaint chop-houses and taverns of old London, rather than around the mahogany tables of the more famous clubs.

The Cave of Harmony, fronting Covent Garden Market — he knew in his youth. There to quote from “The New-comer,” “song and cup” passed merrily, and I daresay the songs and bumpers were encored.

We have his own words as proof that the tap room was near Covent Garden, for in “A Night’s Pleasure” there occurs these words:

“‘What! is the old Cave of Harmony still extant?’ I asked. ‘I have not been there these twenty years.’

“And memory carried me back to the days when Light-sides, of Corpus, myself, and little Oaks, the Johnian, came up to town in a chaise-and-four, at the long vacation at the end of our freshman’s year, ordered turtle and venison for dinner at the Bedford, blubbered over ‘Black-eyed Susan’ at the play, and then finished the evening at that very Harmonic Cave, where the famous English Improvisatore

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sang with such prodigious talent that we asked him to stay with us in the country.

“‘And so the Cave of Harmony is open,’ I said, looking at little Grigg with a sad and tender interest, and feeling that I was about a hundred years old.

“‘*I believe you my baw-aw-oy!*’ said he, adopting the tone of an exceedingly refined and popular actor, whose choral and comic powers render him a general favourite.

“‘Does Bivins keep it?’ I asked, in a voice of profound melancholy.

“‘Hoh! What a flat you are!’ You might as well ask if Mrs. Siddons acted *Lady Macbeth* to-night, and if Queen Anne’s dead or not. I tell you what, Spec, my boy — you’re getting a regular old flat — foggy, sir, a positive old foggy. How the deuce do *you* pretend to be a man about town, and not know that Bivins has left the Cavern? Law bless you! Come in and see: I know the landlord — I’ll introduce you to him.’

“This was an offer which no man could resist; and so Grigg and I went through the Piazza, and down the steps of that well-remembered place of conviviality. . . .

“The room was full of young, rakish-looking lads, with a dubious sprinkling of us middle-aged youth, and stalwart, red-faced fellows from the country, with whiskey noggins before them, and bent upon seeing life.” . . .

“He said he would have a sixth glass if we would stop: but we didn’t; and he took his sixth glass without us. My melancholy young friend had begun another comic song,

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and I could bear it no more. The market carts were rattling into Covent Garden; and the illuminated clock marked all sorts of small hours as we concluded this night's pleasure."

Costigan was generally to be seen at the Cave of Harmony and in the opening chapters of "The Newcomes" we are told how the outraged Colonel, after listening to one of his ribald songs, denounced the old reprobate in unmeasured terms, and catching Clive by the arm, marched the boy out of the polluted atmosphere into "the fresh night air of Covent Garden Market."

"Holding on by various tables, the Captain had sidled up, without accident to himself or any of the jugs and glasses round about him, to the table where we sat, and had taken his place near the writer, his old acquaintance.

" . . . 'He's a great character,' whispered that unlucky King of Corpus to his neighbour, the Colonel . . . 'Captain Costigan, will you take something to drink?'

"'Bedad, I will,' says the Captain, 'and I'll sing ye a song tu.'

"The unlucky wretch, who scarcely knew what he was doing, or saying, selected one of the most outrageous performances of his *repertoire*, fired off a tipsy howl by way of overture, and away he went. At the end of the second verse the Colonel started up, clapping on his hat, seizing his stick, and looking as ferocious as though he had been going to do battle with a Pindaree. 'Silence!' he roared out.

"'Hear, hear!' cried certain wags at a farther table. 'Go on, Costigan!' said others.

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“Go on!” cries the Colonel, in his high voice, trembling with anger. ‘Does any gentleman say, “Go on”? Does any man who has a wife and sisters, or children at home, say “Go on” to such disgusting ribaldry as this? Do you dare, sir, to call yourself a gentleman, and to say that you hold the king’s commission, and to sit down amongst Christians and men of honour, and defile the ears of young boys with this wicked balderdash?’

“Why do you bring young boys here, old boy?’ cries a voice of the malcontents.

“Why? Because I thought I was coming to a society of gentlemen,’ cried out the indignant Colonel. ‘Because I never could have believed that Englishmen could meet together and allow a man, and an old man, so to disgrace himself. For shame, you old wretch! Go home to your bed, you hoary old sinner! And for my part, I’m not sorry that my son should see, for once in his life, to what shame and degradation and dishonour, drunkenness and whiskey may bring a man. Never mind the change, sir! Curse the change!’ says the Colonel, facing the amazed waiter. ‘Keep it till you see me in this place again; which will be never — by George, never!’ And shouldering his stick, and scowling round at the company of scared bacchanalians the indignant gentleman stalked away, his boy after him.”

It is generally conceded that this Cave was no other than the old chophouse known as “Evans’s” — a resort to which Thackeray once took Mr. Lowell to listen to the last chapters of “The Newcomes.” Since then a new stone front has been added and the name changed to that of

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the Sporting Club, — the white building seen in my sketch through the columns of St. Paul's.

Of the pedigree of the adjoining structures, no question can arise. The "Bedford Hotel," which runs out of my sketch on its extreme right hand, is to-day the same old pile of masonry — black, queer, and fog-stained — that welcomed Thackeray in his younger days, as well as many of his characters. Here he invariably "put up," whenever in his early wanderings he strayed into London. His description of it might almost be written under my sketch, so little changes have taken place in the surroundings:

"The two great national theatres on one side," he says, "a churchyard full of mouldy but undying celebrities on the other; a fringe of houses studded in every part with anecdote or history; an arcade often more gloomy and deserted than a cathedral aisle; a rich cluster of brown old taverns — one of them filled with the counterfeit presentments of many actors long since silent, who scowl and smile once more from the canvas upon the grandsons of their dead admirers; a something in the air which breathes of old books, old painters, and old authors; a place beyond all other places one would choose in which to hear the chimes at midnight, a crystal palace — the representative of the present — which presses in timidly from a corner upon many things of the past; a withered bank that has been sucked dry by a felonious clerk, a squat building with a hundred columns, and chapel-looking fronts, which always stands knee-deep in baskets, flowers, and scattered vegetables; a common centre into which Nature showers her choicest gifts, and where the kindly fruits of the earth often nearly choke the

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narrow thoroughfares; a population that never seems to sleep, and that does all in its power to prevent other sleeping; a place where the very latest suppers and the earliest breakfasts jostle each other over the footways."

This same bustle and noise surrounded my easel when I opened it under the great portico of St. Paul's, and began the composition with the church on my left, its columns framing the buildings which Thackeray's pen made so real, and so interesting to his readers of to-day.

The crowd about me was greater, perhaps, than usual, because of the novelty of the sight — outdoor painters being scarce at Covent Garden Market — and because, no doubt, the roof of the portico served as a shelter from the rain, which seemed determined to make a day of it. But it was a good-natured, orderly crowd, the market-men marking a protecting circle about me with the toes of their heavy boots, the women and children looking over their shoulders.

None of them had ever heard of "Evans's." They all knew that the white house between the columns, and which my bit of charcoal was making clear to them, had been a tavern of one kind or another — longer ago than even the oldest could remember — up to the time the Sporting Club moved in, but that was as far as their information went.

They "knowed all about" Tavistock's, next the Bedford. I could get "a bite and a pint o' bitters easy, if I was a bit hongry at Tavistock's."

And so, the sketch finished and the rain over, I betook myself to the old, mouldy, smoky tavern under the arcade, and sat me down to the very table no doubt, at which



COVENT GARDEN MARKET, WITH PORTICO OF ST. PAUL'S CHURCH



IN THACKERAY'S LONDON

Thackeray, Sir Peter Lely, Turner, Kneller, and many other worthies of the time had had "a morsel to eat and a sup o' drink"—and out of the same mug, no doubt; carpeted with the same sawdust on the floor, the webs of forgotten spiders clinging to the rafters overhead.



CHAPTER XII
FLEET STREET AND
"THE COCK" TAVERN



CHAPTER XII

FLEET STREET AND "THE COCK" TAVERN

FLEET STREET and its tortuous by-alleys were for hundreds of years famous for its taverns. Here not only the wits and gourmands of the day made merry, but within their hospitable walls could be found at all hours of the day, and most of those of the night, men of note and quality.

"The coffee house," to quote Macaulay, "was the Londoner's home, and those who wished to find a gentleman, commonly asked . . . whether he frequented the Grecian or the Rainbow."

Of these but few remain. Of many only their sites are known. All of them, however, are remembered because they were the haunts of men whose names are household words to-day. In the Devil's Tavern, we hear of Swift dining with Dr. Garth and Addison, Garth treating; and of Dr. Johnson presiding at a supper party which was given to Mrs. Charlotte Lennox, in honour of the publication of her first novel, "The Life of Harriet Stuart."

"The supper was elegant," so runs the chronicle, "and Johnson had directed that a magnificent hot apple-pie

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should make a part of it; and this he would have stuck with bay leaves, because, forsooth, Mrs. Lenox was an authoress. . . . About five (A. M.) Johnson's face shone with meridian splendour, though his drink had been only lemonade. The dawn of day began to put us in mind of our reckoning; but the waiters were all so overcome with sleep that it was two hours before a bill could be had, and it was not until near eight that the creaking of the street door gave the signal for our departure."

The famous Kit-Kat Club stood in Shire Lane. Here, in Queen Anne's reign, thirty-nine young noblemen and gentlemen attached to the House of Hanover were wont to "sleep away the days and drink away the nights."

Hard by was the Bible Tavern, which was appropriately chosen by Jack Sheppard for many of his orgies, for it was possessed of a trap-door leading to a subterranean passage.

The Rainbow — the second to be opened in London — dated as far back as 1637. Here its proprietor, a certain James Farr, a barber, was, in 1657, prevented by the Parish from "makinge and sellinge of a drinke called coffee, whereby in making the same he annoyeth his neighbours by evil smells."

"Dicks" — now an Italian restaurant — may still be found at No. 8 entered by a passage.

"The Cock" alone survives—one of the few ancient taverns remaining unaltered *internally* from the time of James I. The outside fell into the clutches of the Demon of Unrest in 1887, and was sent to the dumping ground to make room for what Hare calls "a ludicrous Temple Bar Memorial." But the inside fittings were rescued bodily,



THE COCK TAVERN



IN THACKERAY'S LONDON

carried across Fleet Street, and set up in its new home, No. 22, a short distance from its old site at 201 — not a renovation, nor a patching up, nor making one half of it new to match the old, but the putting together in a new room, the size of the old one, everything that the old one had contained. The old Jacobean fireplace, with its grate, mantel, fender and fire tongs and shovel, was set up intact; the same old settees were placed in the same relative positions as at No. 201; the same old prints and sketches, and in the same frames, were hung in their old panels on the walls, and the same cheap gas jets fastened to the well-smoked ceiling — to-day a quarter of a century old. Even now much of the old pewter, crockery, and glass can be found on the time-worn shelving, while the floor, as in the old days, is bare of a carpet, and the time-honoured tables still smile back at you from out of the polish made and kept bright by the elbows of a hundred celebrities.

It was to one of these very tables that Pepys, to his wife's great aggravation, conducted the pretty Mrs. Knipp, and here they drank, ate a lobster, and sang and were "mighty merry till almost midnight."

On another table Tennyson wrote "Will Waterproof's Lyrical Monologue," beginning:

"O plump head waiter at The Cock,
To which I most resort,
How goes the time? 'Tis five o'clock.
Go fetch a pint of port."

At still another table Thackeray was accustomed to take his chop and stout—it being but a step from *Punch's*

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"*Round Table*," with its discussions, plans, and piles of proofs, to a quiet corner in The Cock. And then he loved a good dinner:

"I am a diner-out, and live in London," he writes in one of "Mr. Brown's" letters. "I protest, as I look back at the men and dinners I have seen in the last week, my mind is filled with manly respect and pleasure. How good they have been! how admirable the entertainments! how worthy the men!

"Let me, without divulging names, and with a cordial gratitude, mention a few of those whom I have met and who have all done their duty.

"Sir, I have sat at table with a great, a world-renowned statesman. I watched him during the progress of the banquet — I am at liberty to say that he enjoyed it like a man.

"On another day it was a celebrated literary character. It was beautiful to see him at his dinner: cordial and generous, jovial and kindly, the great author enjoyed himself as the great statesman — may he long give us good books and good dinners!

"Yet another day, and I sat opposite to a Right Reverend Bishop. My lord, I was pleased to see good thing after good thing disappear before you, and think no man ever better became that rounded episcopal apron. How amiable he was; how kind! He put water into his wine. Let us respect the moderation of the Church.

"And then the men learned in the law: How they dine! what hospitality, what splendour, what comfort, what wine! As we walked away very gently in the moonlight, only three days since, from the ——'s, a friend of my



FLEET STREET FROM COCK TAVERN



IN THACKERAY'S LONDON

youth and myself, we could hardly speak for gratitude: 'Dear sir,' we breathed fervently, 'ask us soon again.' One never has too much at those perfect banquets — no hideous headaches ensue, or horrid resolutions about adopting *Revalenta Arabica* for the future — but contentment with all the world, light slumbers, joyful waking to grapple with the morrow's work. Ah, dear Bob, those lawyers have great merits. There is a dear old judge at whose family table if I could see you seated, my desire in life would be pretty nearly fulfilled. If you make yourself agreeable there, you will be in a fair way to get on in the world. But you are a youth still. Youths go to balls: men go to dinners."

Often when he was supposed to be dining at these tables of the great, he was tucked away in some quaint tavern.

"Instead of dancing at Almack's," writes Walter Besant, in his "Fifty Years Ago," "he was taking his chop and stout at The Cock; instead of gambling at Crockford's, he was writing 'copy' for any paper which would take it."

And it was all he could afford had his friends but known it — in those early days when "all that he wrote was not taken, and all that was taken was not approved" — when even "The Great Hoggarty Diamond" was so little thought of at Fraser's, that he had been called upon to shorten it. "An incident," says Trollope, "disagreeable in its nature to any literary gentleman, and likely to be specially so when he knows that his provision of bread, certainly of improved bread and butter, is at stake."

It was his table at The Cock that I had come to see on this Saturday afternoon — the only afternoon in the week

IN THACKERAY'S LONDON

when the room would be free of guests, every shop being cleared of customers at midday in modern London Town.

Henry, the old head waiter who had been moved across in 1887 with the fireplace and fittings, shook his head in answer to my inquiry as to the traditions connecting the great author with any special tables in the place. And so did the flat-nosed boy who sowed the seed of a fresh crop of sawdust from a tin pan, and who later on brought up an assortment of bread and cheese cut into little dominoes, which he scattered over the sawdust "to pizen de rats over Sunday," he explained. And so did the proprietor, who produced a big book filled with the signatures of many celebrities the world over, who had eaten "a double" and had their pewters refilled. But careful scrutinizing failed to find any record of Mr. Thackeray's name among the T's. Neither had he any record of Pendennis or Warrington, who had their quarters in Lamb Court in the Middle Temple, but five minutes away.

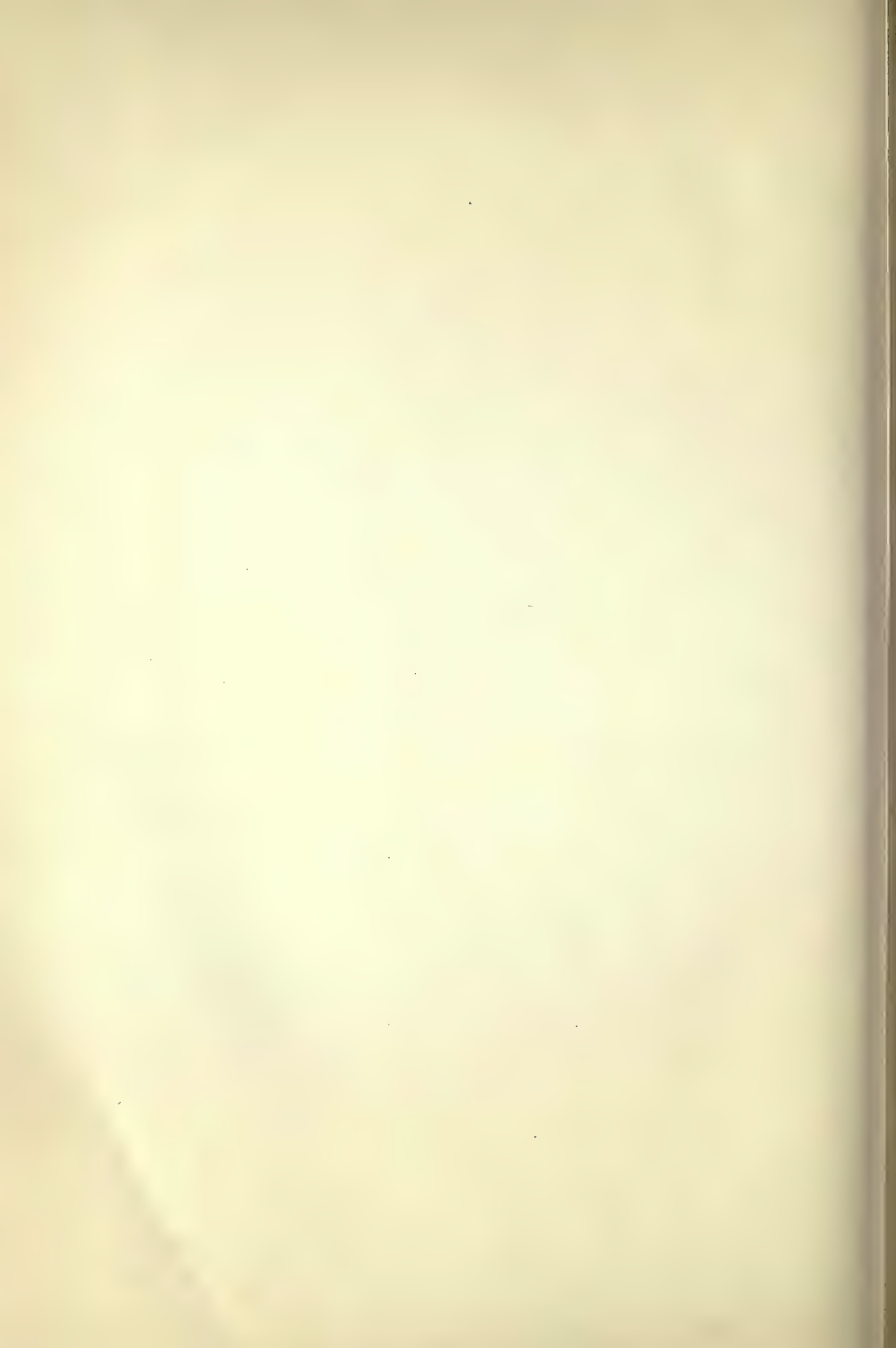
But I had already made up my mind. Thackeray's table would be hidden away in some corner, out of reach of the man who came in late, joggling the table as he squeezed past. It would be near a window, where the light would come in over his left shoulder — a necessity with most authors. It would, too, be near, and yet far enough away from the fire so that its blaze would cheer and yet not scorch; and so, after scanning the long narrow room, I placed him at the table on the left of my sketch — the one on this side of the grate. Here, he would have no opposite neighbour, there being only room for one, and here, too, his repast eaten and the room empty, he might, as was his

IN THACKERAY'S LONDON

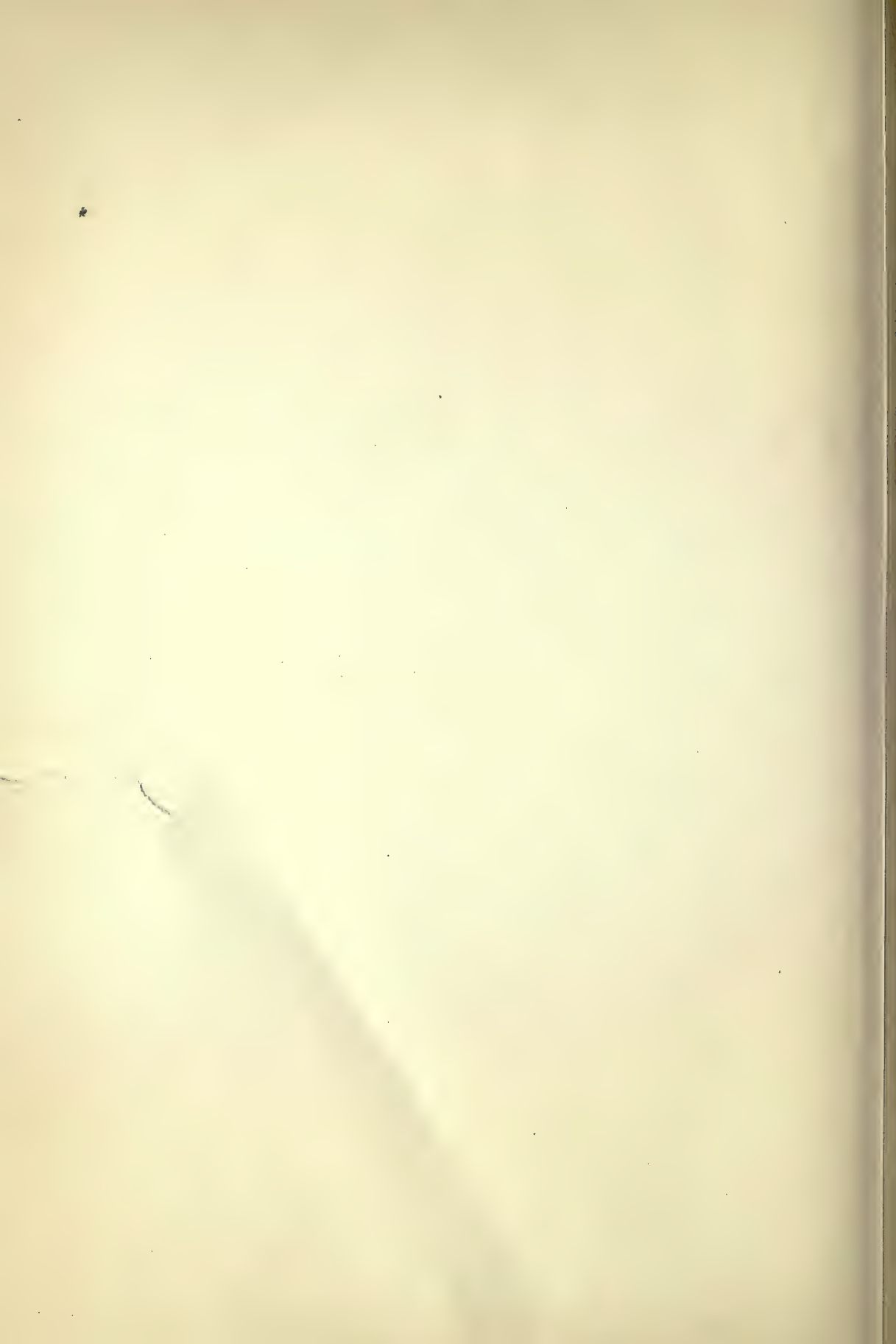
custom, pull a wad of crumpled sheets from his coat-tail pocket just as he had done that day at Evans's, when he exclaimed to Mr. Lowell, "I have killed the Colonel! the tears which had been swelling his lids for some time trickling down his face, the last word almost an inarticulate sob."

My sketch finished, Henry broiled me a chop and brought me a mug, and I squeezed into Mr. Thackeray's seat and opened my napkin, just as he had done scores of times. The chop was excellent, and so were the contents of the mug; so were the encomiums passed upon my sketch by the proprietor, Henry, and the flat-nosed boy — the latter suggesting that it was "drawed to de loife."

N. B. — Future historians, in writing of this important event, will please not get the dates mixed or twisted, as so often happens. It was *at Mr. Thackeray's table* in the *new* Cock, remember, that all this happened, and not *with* Mr. Thackeray in the *old*.



CHAPTER XIII
THE CHESHIRE CHEESE



CHAPTER XIII

THE CHESHIRE CHEESE

OF COURSE he came here, tucked his knees under the sharp edges of the heavy oak tables, and ordered the dishes and brew he especially liked. This, and other like resorts, was his Bohemia, and Bohemia he loved.

“A pleasant land,” he says in “Philip” — “not fenced with drab stucco like Tyburnia or Belgravia; not guarded by a huge standing army of footmen; not echoing with noble chariots; not replete with polite chintz drawing-rooms and neat tea-tables; a land over which hangs an endless fog, occasioned by much tobacco; a land of chambers, billiard-rooms, supper-rooms, oysters; a land of song; a land where soda-water flows freely in the morning; a land of tin dish-covers from taverns, and frothing porter; a land of lotus-eating (with lots of cayenne pepper), of pulls on the river, of delicious reading of novels, magazines, and saunterings in many studios; a land where men call each other by their Christian names; where most are old, where almost all are young, and where, if a few oldsters enter, it is because they have preserved more tenderly and carefully than others their youthful spirits, and the delightful capacity to be idle.”

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And the Cheshire Cheese, then as now, is pure Bohemia.

If the dishes did not tempt him — particularly a famous pudding of lark and oysters, steak and kidney — its associations certainly would, for it was near here, so tradition goes, that Goldsmith for the first time received Johnson at supper, and it was from here later on, Goldsmith being pressed for his rent, that Dr. Johnson set poor Goldsmith free.

The record in detail is worth repeating, as it gives a side light on the lives of some great men.

In 1760 Goldsmith removed to No. 6 Wine Office Court, Fleet Street, where he occupied more respectable lodgings than any to which he had before aspired. It is nearly opposite the well-known Cheshire Cheese Tavern. Here, Dr. Johnson first visited him on the 31st of May, 1761. He came — his clothes new and his wig nicely powdered, wishing, as he explained to Percy (of the "Reliques"), who inquired the cause of such unusual neatness, to show a better example to Goldsmith, whom he had heard of as "justifying his disregard of cleanliness and decency by quoting his practice." It was from his lodgings in Wine Office Court, while Goldsmith's landlady was pressing him within doors and the bailiff without, that Dr. Johnson "received one morning," so his great friend Boswell reports as saying, "a message from poor Goldsmith that he was in great distress, and as it was not in his power to come to me, begging that I would come to him as soon as possible. I sent him a guinea, and promised to come to him directly. I accordingly went to him as soon as I was dressed, and found that his landlady had arrested him for his rent, at which he was



INTERIOR OF THE CHESHIRE CHEESE



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in a violent passion. I perceived that he had already changed my guinea, and had a bottle of Madeira and a glass before him. I put the cork into the bottle, desired he would be calm, and began to talk to him of the means by which he might be extricated. He then told me that he had a novel ready for the press, which he produced to me. I looked into it, and saw its merit; told the landlady I should soon return, and, having gone to James Newbery, a bookseller, sold it for sixty pounds. I brought Goldsmith the money, and he discharged his rent, not without rating his landlady in a high tone for having used him so ill."

The manuscript lay neglected for two years, and was then published without a notion of its future popularity. The world has since known it as "The Vicar of Wakefield."

The seat is still shown where the great doctor was wont to sit dispensing wisdom; and his portrait, which hangs over it — a latter-day addition — is quite clear in my sketch, as well as the edge of the table and the window-sash dividing the two rooms.

Closer inspection of the wood of the seat itself reveals the reverence in which it is held. To have eaten a chop and drank from a mug while at rest on the great lexicographer's settee, is something to be proud of, and so the fibre of the wood is kept at high polish by the trousers of thousands of globe-trotters the world over, just as the "Pope's Toe" is kept at high polish by the lips of millions of devotees.

Although Boswell fails to mention that the great doctor ever darkened the tavern's doors, many of my brother

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Americans believe this reserved-seat story. Again, they like the place, and I do not wonder. Cobwebs, a sanded floor, low ceilings, narrow seats, a general appearance of falling to pieces — a draught of air from a cool court, if it be hot, and a cheery soft-coal fire if it be cold, are comforting contrasts to steam heat in a skyscraper.

In regard to my own belief that Mr. Thackeray was an habitu   of the place, I admit that while The Cock may have been two or three blocks nearer to Brick Court, where he lived, and Hare Court, where he studied law, I still maintain that the Cheshire Cheese was just as delightful and even more convenient for Welsh rare-bits and good old glee-singing at midnight, than the "Cave of Harmony." If Captain Costigan himself was not met staggering in the narrow alleyway, some other equally bibulous gentleman could be seen rolling out. These sort of things have been happening for years, at the Cheshire Cheese, and may be repeated for all I know any day of the coming week.

My sketch will give you a fair idea of the interior as you enter the main room, the floor of which is level with the street, but nothing that I or anybody else could do with brush or pen could convey to you the faintest idea of its age and mustiness—of the cobwebs embroidering the corners of the ceiling; of the sawdust and its smell covering the floor; of the damp mouldy odours that drift in from the damp alley outside, reeking with grime and soggy soot; of the cramped little bar, the size of a big packing box, in which are crowded as many thirsty men as can be squeezed in; of the breakneck stairs that go rickety split to the cellar below, where there is running water and a towel; or the staggering flight that

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twists up to the floor above, where there is a cook-range and funny-shaped "coppers" of pottery, in which the famous pudding is cooked; to say nothing of the cramped, tumbled-down rooms above where certain choice spirits, members of several clubs, still meet on certain nights in the week and hold high revel — just as happened, I dare say, in Mr. Thackeray's time.

I ordered a chop, of course, and a mug of 'arf and 'arf, and found a table for Evins where he too could eat and drink at his leisure — the taxi having been backed up behind a pile of brick where Bobby said he would keep an eye on it. I had to play havoc however with the arrangement of the room before I opened my easel. There were too many things in one place — mostly tables, and, as I explained, I could see nothing of the interior either over or under them.

Everybody came at once to my assistance. The tables were picked up bodily, the settees shoved back, and a way cleared for my stool and easel. The news that an American was taking notes, with an eye to their being printed, including lifelike portraits of the staff, had gone through the place like wildfire.

At the first stroke of my coal, business of every kind came to a standstill. Even the trickle of froth, flowing from the big keg of ale on the counter of the small bar, dried up. Soon proprietor, head waiter, all the subs, both of the barmaids, and five minutes later — as soon as the news reached the upper floor — two of the cooks — fat comfortable cooks, with the marks of their profession spattered over their persons — were grouped around my easel. Some were standing on settees, others on tables — wherever they could see best.

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Even the few remaining guests (it was now after three o'clock) let their steaks and kidneys get cold and their mugs "go dead" to watch the process.

I "sat them up," of course, when it was all over and was told to come again and welcome, and not to forget to send a copy of the newspaper, Evins gathering up as we left the addresses of a number of individuals, male and female, who would be much "obleged" if I would be so kind."

Hurry up, you belated ones who have not yet seen the Cheshire Cheese. It is the last of the Inns — the oldest relic of its kind in all London.

CHAPTER XIV
FLEET STREET AND ST. PAUL'S



CHAPTER XIV

FLEET STREET AND ST. PAUL'S

STOPPING my taxi, as I did, on the edge of the decline that sweeps toward old St. Paul's, watching the rush and choke of the traffic, it was hard for me to believe that right under my wheels flowed the Fleet Ditch—the greatest of London's sewers. What goes on down below the crust of asphalt is just as well hidden from sight. The merciful rain, no doubt, helps in the cleansing, and so does the emptying of countless tubs—the Englishman being the best scrubbed biped on earth. What goes on above is in clear sight every hour of the day and night, for nobody ever goes to bed in Fleet Street. Here centre the thousand wires that bring the news of the world to as many sleepless presses, and here the rumble of delivery wagons, loaded with tons of journals, is heard from midnight to dawn.

It has always been the same story. Many of the presses of the great publishers and printers have dated back into the last century and before. The printing office of Richard Tottel, law stationers in the time of Henry VIII pounded away here. At the angle of Chancery Lane gate Izaak Walton had his "Compleat Angler" printed. Hard by lived Drayton and Abraham Cowley, whose father was a type-

IN THACKERAY'S LONDON

setter; and Wynkyn de Worde, the famous printer whose sign was the Falcon.

Here, too, along its narrow sidewalks, the unknown Michael Angelo Titmarsh was wont to make his disheartened way from one printing office to another, in his search for a publisher; and here, within walking distance of where I sat perched up in my cab, my imagination in full play, Mr. William Makepeace Thackeray, but a few years later, corrected the proof of the pages which were then making him famous.

These earlier years had been bitter indeed to the young author. He had failed as an attorney; he had been cheated out of his patrimony by a card-sharper; he had given up all hopes of being an artist, and now, at twenty-six years of age, had again started life, this time as an author, and in competition, too, with Dickens who was one year his junior, and who at this time (1837-8) had reached almost the zenith of his reputation.

All this was well known at the time. Macready says, in his Diary: "At Garrick Club where I dined and saw the papers. Met Thackeray, who has spent all his fortune, and is now about to settle in Paris, I believe, as an artist."

Just as I had followed him the day before into The Cock, and occupied his seat at table, so now I studied the street over which he had dragged his weary steps, wondering, among other things, whether he had stopped, as I had, to measure with his eye the swing and crush of the traffic around him; wondering, too, whether the great dome of St. Paul's, dominating the cavernous gloom of the struggling, dirt-begrimed city, had not brought him, as it did me, a note of



FLEET STREET AND ST. PAUL'S



IN THACKERAY'S LONDON

dignity and rest. He loved it, I know, and loved to be beneath its shadow. One day, when Fields was with him, he was mentioning the various sights he had seen, when Thackeray interrupted. "But you haven't seen the greatest one yet," he said. "Go with me to-day to St. Paul's, and hear the charity children sing." So they went, and Mr. Fields noticed that Thackeray had his head bowed, and that his whole frame shook with emotion "as the children of poverty rose to pour out their anthem of praise."

Thackeray himself tells us about it in one of the lectures on the Georges. "Five-thousand charity children, like nosegays, and with sweet, fresh voices, sing the hymn which makes every heart thrill with praise and happiness. I have seen a hundred grand sights in the world — coronations, Parisian splendours, Crystal Palace openings, Pope's chapels with their processions of long-tailed cardinals and quavering choirs of fat *soprani*, but thinking in all Christendom there is no such sight as Charity Children's Day. *Non Angli, sed Angeli*. As one looks at that beautiful multitude of innocents, as the first note strikes; indeed, one can almost fancy that cherubs are singing." And elsewhere he has written: "To see a hundred boys marshalled in a chapel or old hall; to hear their sweet, fresh voices when they chant, and look in their brave, calm faces; I say, does not the sight and sound of them smite you, somehow, with a pang of exquisite kindness."

The surge and crush is, no doubt, greater to-day than it was in Thackeray's time. The millions have pressed closer and the fight for footing has become more acute. But the

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great church still retains its unruffled dignity, with that peculiar aloofness from everything around and beneath it, which has characterized it since the day of its birth: the calm, silent dignity of the Sphinx, brooding as it sits, the silent shadowed past an open book, the vivid present an unsolved wonder.

It was this last that I had come to see, and record — that uncanny roar and clash that beats against the blackened walls of the very church itself. But where could I find some coign of vantage from which to express it on my canvas?

Evins, as was his habit in difficult situations, solved the problem. Indeed, now I look back upon my experiences, Evins solved most of my problems. We would pull, he suggested, up in front of the Cheshire Cheese about lunch hour, and then both the crowd and Bobby would look upon our wheel-room as a matter of right — there being a continuous line of taxies, hansoms, and four-wheelers in front of its narrow slit of an entrance “around one o’clock.”

But this time, to my chagrin, the ruse did not work — not any longer than it took to set up my easel.

“Beg yer pardon, sir, but ’ow long be you thinkin’ o’ stayin’ ’ere?”

“About two hours, Bobby.”

“Well, I don’t know, sir. I’ll try to keep ’em off, but it’s a bad time o’ the day. They do be getting out their stuff, and these ’ere express wagons will be drivin’ up. I’ll have to move yer further along mebbe, or back; ’pende on ’ow they come. I’ll do me best, sir.”

The easel was up now, Evins sharpening charcoals and

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picking up my rubber for me every time I dropped it. I work with both hands — the flat of the left, and the fingers of the right.

"Come, move on, won't ye? Ye see what the gentleman's doing — ye needn't crawl down his throat." This to a bread-line of boys edging along the footboard, to look over my shoulder.

Another Bobby joined in. He had seen the mob from up the street and had moved down to find out what it was all about. Evins explained, and I kept at work, losing only the few seconds necessary to free one hand and give him a respectful salute.

Every peddler in Fleet Street now swooped down — suspender men, postal-cards men, sellers of shoestrings, blacking, neckties, eye-glasses, soap, perfumery — everything that could be carried on a tray or strung around their necks. These while the two Bobbies were straightening out a cart tangle, formed a circle about me, shouting their wares — some of them being thrust under my chin.

Then a calm ensued — so dead a calm that I looked about to find the cause. Across the street, on a pile of bricks — the débris of a building — the head of a photographer was hidden under a black cloth. The lens pointed my way. With him a moment later came his crowd.

"Would you tell me what you are doing?"

I pointed to my sketch.

"Yes, I see, but what for?"

"For the fun of it, principally."

"Yes, but this is a hired taxi — comes rather high for fun, don't it?"

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I nodded and kept at work.

"Would you tell me where you're from and what's your name?"

I laid down my holder and looked up. Matters were drifting into the personal.

"What's that got to do with it?"

"Nothing to you, but it's a good deal to me. I'm from the *Mirror*."

The officer's voice now broke in.

"I'll have to ask ye to move on, sir. I 'ate to disturb ye, but ——"

"All right, officer — just a minute more on the dome, — the sun is striking it now. Take a look while I put it in."

It was Greek to Bobby, but I had excited his curiosity and gained his attention long enough for me to get a high light in the centre column surrounding the dome.

"There — open the door, Evins, and let me out. Anywhere now you say, officer — shall I send her off the street?"

"No — move her down a bit, and let them goods wagons get closer. Thank ye, sir. I'll smoke it after dinner."

The photographer bore down again. He now had his instrument under his arm — the black cloth around his throat.

"American, aren't you?"

"Yes. How did you know?"

"Heard you talk. Won't you give me your name and tell me what you're doing? One of our editors saw you at work and sent me out."

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"Will it do you any good?"

"*Rather.*"

"How much?"

"Might be ten bob — might be more."

And that's how Evins and I got into the picture papers.



CHAPTER XV
HARE AND LAMB COURT
MIDDLE TEMPLE



CHAPTER XV
HARE AND LAMB COURT
MIDDLE TEMPLE

ON THE left of the hooded doorway, as seen in my sketch, are the chambers in which Thackeray studied law with Taprell — a profession to which he never took kindly. In a letter to his mother — he was then in his twenty-first year — he sketched himself in a blue coat on a high stool, with a queer client in the shape of an old gentleman with an umbrella, standing on one side, and a very small clerk in a green coat on the other, trying to get at his master with five folios by a stepladder.

In another epistle he writes:

“May 22, 1832. . . . The sun won’t shine into Taprell’s chambers, and the high stools don’t blossom and bring forth buds. . . . I do so long for fresh air, and fresh butter I would say only it isn’t romantic. . . . Yesterday I took a long walk to Kensington Gardens, and had a pleasant stroll on the green banks of the Serpentine. I wonder people don’t frequent them more: they are far superior to any of the walks in Paris that are so much admired and talked of.”

It is from these same chambers at No. 1 Hare Court,

IN THACKERAY'S LONDON

that Thackeray, giving up for the time both Taprell's and the law, "strode away for a twelve hours' stretch over the moors of Cornwall to plunge headlong into the feverish delights of platform and canvassing — perhaps the keenest form of interest and excitement that can occupy the human brain. It is impossible once to indulge in it, and, for whatever reason, to give it up, without feeling a blank in the activities of life which is very difficult to fill. One can imagine how Thackeray threw himself into the battle.

But alas for Taprell's! alas for the monthly income! and alas for the woolsack!"

Of this escapade he writes to his mother on June 25, 1832, the letter being dated at Cornwall:

"Are you surprised, dear Mother, at the direction? Certainly not more prepared for it than I was myself, but you must know that on Tuesday in last week I went to breakfast with Charles Buller, and he received a letter from his constituents at Liskeard requesting him immediately to come down; he was too ill, but instead deputed Arthur Buller and myself — so off we set that same night by the mail, arrived at Plymouth the next day, and at Liskeard the day after, where we wrote addresses, canvassed farmers, and dined with attorneys. . . .

"I have been lying awake this morning meditating on the wise and proper manner I shall employ my fortune in when I come of age, which, if I live so long, will take place in three weeks. First, I do not intend to quit my little chambers in the Temple, then I will take a regular monthly income which I will never exceed. . . . God bless you, dear Mother; write directly and give your orders. . . .



HARE COURT



IN THACKERAY'S LONDON

Charles Buller comes down at the end of next week—if you want me sooner I will come, if not I should like to wait for the Reform rejoicings which are to take place on his arrival, particularly as I have had a great share in the canvassing.”

“In 1834,” says Rideing, “he was called to the bar, and for some time he occupied chambers in the venerable buildings with the late Tom Taylor. His rooms were then in an adjoining Court, at Number 10 Crown Office Row. Philip had chambers in the Temple, and there, also, in classic Lamb’s Court, Pendennis and Warrington were located . . . Warrington smoking his cutty pipe, and writing his articles—the fine-hearted fellow, the unfortunate gentleman, the unpedantic scholar, who took Pendennis by the hand and introduced him to Grub Street when that young unfortunate came to the end of his means . . .”

A dark, muggy, London day it was, when I opened my easel in front of the house that had seen the young fellow’s first efforts to conquer a career, for to-day, as in Thackeray’s time, the sun “does not shine in Taprell’s Chambers,” in Hare Court, nor out of it for that matter. Nor was there anybody about. All the rush, all the roar, and under-hum of the great city was gone as soon as I dived under the archway leading out of Fleet Street, and made my way down a narrow lane, into the solemn quiet of the Middle Temple. And the quiet continued as I passed down and into the small square of Brick Court where Thackeray had his chambers, and so on into the various Inns of Court one after another—Pump Court, Lamb Court, Crown Office Row, Hare Court, and the others.

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But desolate and abandoned as they were, the watchful eyes of the Imperial Government were open upon their solitudes.

"I presume you have a permit, sir," came from a pleasant speaking individual with some kind of livery decorating his portly person — this before I had opened my easel. Indeed, he had been already snuffing around our heels, as a dog follows a basket, wondering what Evins was going to do with my kit when it was unstrapped.

"Yes, I have a permit," and I drew the paper from my pocket. It had been sent me the day before by a good friend of mine — a distinguished member of the bar — Queen's Counsel, and all that sort of thing.

"Yes, sir; all right, sir; we do have to be rather particular, sir."

"Why?"

"Well, sir, you see, sir ——" and he paused.

"Never heard of anybody making off with a pair of marble steps, did you?" I inquired.

"No, sir."

"Nor of an iron railing, or chimney, or some little thing like that being tucked under a visitor's arm and carried off as a souvenir?"

"No, sir — not as I knows on. But it's all right, sir. Thank ye, sir," and a coin of the realm found its way down his side pocket. "If ye want me, sir, I'm outside there, and if I can do anything I should be ——"

But I was already at work.

Nothing I had yet seen and studied in my search for picturesque material for this book, had been so satisfying.

IN THACKERAY'S LONDON

Every square yard of the surface had echoed to the tread of Thackeray's feet, or those of his characters. The rooms on the third floor, over the entrance of the building in Lamb Court were those which Warrington and Pendennis occupied. The vines may not have been so thick in their day, and there have been some repairs here and there, but otherwise the outside is quite as when the two young men made it their home and the friendship between Warrington and Pendennis grew the closer. They had met at the mess, and when the dinner was over Warrington had asked Arthur where he was going.

"I thought of going home to dress, and hear Grisi in 'Norma,'" Pen said.

"Are you going to meet anybody there?" he asked.

Pen said: "No — only to hear the music," of which he was very fond.

"You had much better come home and smoke a pipe with me," said Warrington — "a very short one. Come, I live close by in Lamb Court, and we'll talk over Boniface and old times."

With the result that "Ere long Pen gave up his lodgings in St. James's, to which he had migrated on quitting his hotel, and found it was much more economical to take up his abode with Warrington in Lamb Court, and furnish and occupy his friend's vacant room there. For it must be said of Pen, that no man was more easily led than he to do a thing, when it was a novelty, or when he had a mind to it. And Pidgeon, the youth, and Flanagan, the laundress, divided their allegiance now between Warrington and Pen."

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Here, too, came Major Pendennis, Pen's uncle.

"When Major Pendennis reached that dingy portal of the Upper Temple, it was about twelve o'clock in the day; and he was directed by a civil personage with a badge and a white apron, through some dark alleys, and under various melancholy archways each more dismal than the other, until finally he reached Lamb Court. If it was dark in Pall Mall, what was it in Lamb Court? Candles were burning in many of the rooms there.—in the pupil-room of Mr. Hodgeman, the special pleader, where six pupils were scribbling declarations under the tallow; in Sir Hokey Walker's clerk's room, where the clerk, a person far more gentlemanlike and cheerful in appearance than the celebrated counsel, his master, was conversing in a patronizing manner with the managing clerk of an attorney at the door; and in Curling the wig-maker's melancholy shop, where, from behind the feeble glimmer of a couple of lights, large sergeants' and judges' wigs were looming drearily, with the blank blocks looking at the lamp-post in the court. Two little clerks were playing at toss-half penny under that lamp. A laundress in pattens passed in at one door, a newspaper boy issued from another. A porter, whose white apring was faintly visible, paced up and down. It would be impossible to conceive a place more dismal, and the Major shuddered to think that any one should select such a residence. 'Good God!' he said, 'the poor boy mustn't live on here.' The exquisite climbed up the black stairs until he came to the third story, where, at the sound of his footsteps a great voice inquired: 'Is that the beer?'"

And to these same dismal rooms Colonel Newcome brought



LAMB COURT



IN THACKERAY'S LONDON

little Clive, who had come as a boy to Charter House, just before Pen left for the University.

In Pump Court, there lived the Honourable Algernon Percy Deuceace, the distinguished card-sharper, while within reach of a mug of beer — so near that the bubbles would hold out until the mug arrived — were the Inns and Taverns made famous in Thackeray's pages, one of them, Shepherd's Inn, being kept by Mrs. Bolton, assisted by her daughter Fanny, whose story is told in "Pendennis," while Captain Costigan and Mr. Bows lived in the third floor at No. 4.

These coinings of his brain, we can be sure, were the result of his early life spent in these same courts and chambers.

For as Rideing says, "The man of letters cannot but love the place which has been inhabited by so many of his brethren, and peopled by their creations, as real to us at this day as the authors whose children they were.

"Sir Roger de Coverley walking in the Temple garden," says Mr. Thackeray "and discoursing with Mr. Spectator about the beauties in hoops and patches who are sauntering over the grass, is just as lively a figure to me, as old Samuel Johnson rolling through the fog with the Scotch gentleman at his heels, on their way to Mr. Goldsmith's chambers in Brick court, or Harry Fielding, with inked ruffles and a wet towel round his head, dashing off articles at midnight for the *Covent Garden Journal*, while the printer's boy is asleep in the passage."

What of alterations, scrapings, patchings up and fillings in have taken place in these various courts and their sur-

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roundings, I have not troubled myself to find out. Nothing looks new in London after the fogs and soot of one winter have wreaked their vengeance upon it. Whether the façade is of brick, stone or stucco, depends entirely on what the prevailing winds, whirling the smoke aside, have saved it from, or what some kindly water spout has wrought, scouring as it drenches — as may be seen in many of the statues on Burlington House, where a head, arm, or part of a pedestal chair has been kept white by a constant douche.

As for me, I am glad that these old haunts of Mr. Thackeray and his characters are even blacker to-day than they might have been in his time. For the soot and grime becomes them, and London as well for that matter. A great impressionist, this smoke-smudger, and wiper-out of detail; this believer in masses and simple surfaces this destroyer of gingerbread ornaments, petty mouldings, and cheap flutings!

Restored or not, it is the same old Middle Temple, hidden away from the turmoil of the great city, the home of the recluse and the student. It is also the home of my friends, and so I shall leave my card again on Mr. Thackeray at No. 2 Brick Court, and on Messrs. Warrington and Pendennis at their chambers on the third floor of Lamb Court, and on one or two others in Fig Tree and Pump Courts, and shall hope to find them at home the very next time I go to London.

CHAPTER XVI
LONDON BRIDGE



CHAPTER XVI

LONDON BRIDGE

AUTHORS, poets, statesmen, soldiers, painters, merchants, civilians, cut-throats, and other nimble-fingered gentlemen have, from time to time, been either identified with London Bridge itself, or with some of its nearby features.

No less a person than the immortal John Bunyan, that worthy chronicler of the progress of the pilgrim, had his lodgings at one time on the Bridge itself — when it was a sort of Ponte Vecchio of the period. Philip Massinger, the author of “The British Theatre,” is buried in the Churchyard of St. Mary Overy, afterward St. Saviour’s, Southwark, “at the end of London Bridge.” Sir Thomas More, having lost his head on Tower Hill, had that portion of his body “putt upon London Bridge where as trayter’s heads are sett upon poles, and having remained some moneths, there being to be cast into the Thames, because roome should be made for diverse others who in plentiful sorte suffered martyrdom for the same supremacie; shortly after it was brought by his daughter Margarett, lease — as she stoutly affirmed before the Councill, being called before them for the same matter — it should be

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foode for fishes which she buried where she thought fittest."

Samuel Pepys, after regaling himself at The Cock in Fleet with Mrs. Knipp and other ladies of his acquaintance would betake himself to "the Beare Inn, Southwark at the foote of London Bridge." The divine William lived as late as 1609, says Knight in his "London," in the street known as Clink Street, Southwark, during which time he was associated with the Globe Theatre on the Bank side, which was built in 1594, and was under the management of the same Company as the Blackfriar's, but on the other side of the Thames, and not far from the southern end of Old London Bridge. John Suckling, whom Aubrey described as "an extraordinary accomplished gentleman who grew famous at Court for his readie sparkling witt, as being uncomparably readie at repartying, and as the greatest gallant of his time," and who "died a bachelor in Paris, and of poyson," was also a frequenter at the Bear-at-the-Bridge-Foot. "One of the best bowlers of his time in England," continues Aubrey. "He play'd at Cards rarely well and did use to practise by himself abed, and there studyed the best way of managing the Cards. I remember his Sisters comeing to the Piccadillo, Bowling Green, crying for feare he should lose all their portions."

With all these memories, traditions and historical happenings, linked with its very existence, it is impossible to believe that Mr. Thackeray was not as fully conversant with its associations and surroundings as he was with St. Paul's, or Fleet Street. And yet, I can find only the most casual reference to it in his books.



LONDON BRIDGE



IN THACKERAY'S LONDON

This is more remarkable because many of his brother authors had sought inspiration in and about these same blackened nooks and corners, and had proved their value as settings for fiction.

Mr. Dickens, who both glorified and made real many of its forgotten and overlooked quarters, had in the beginning of his career, revived for his readers in the "Pickwick Papers," "that queer old tavern, the 'George,' with its quaint courtyard" — but ten minutes' walk from the far end of the Bridge, and which I am glad to say still exists, for I visited it the day I made the sketch accompanying this chapter.

It will be remembered that it was in the courtyard of the George that Sam Weller, being at the time "boots" of the hostelry, first met Mr. Pickwick when on his way to catch Jingle and Miss Wardle — a bit of information current at the time the "Pickwick Papers" were being issued, and which, if it reached Mr. Thackeray's ears at all (and it must have done so), would have sent him post-haste to look the spot over, he being particularly anxious, as we all know, to illustrate the book.

It may be that he felt that Mr. Dickens had preëmpted the locality, so to speak, and had thus avoided it. Then, again, this was an open air background, and not a closed drawing-room, or cozy tavern — places almost always used by him when in search of "local colour."

But that he loved the great, gray mass, standing waist-deep in the waters, its strong arms held out to either bank, I have no shadow of doubt.

For a great Bridge it was in his time and still is in ours:

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dignified, solemn, conscious of its strength, unruffled — even when thousands of insects on wheels crawl over its backbone, or lumbering tows sweep beneath its arches.

As for its solidity: Were it a ledge of primeval rock straddling the river, with holes scooped out to let its floods pass in safety, it could not appear to be more permanent or more irresistible. The houses of Parliament themselves might come swooping down with a mighty onslaught, and the old Bridge would but hunch one shoulder of its abutments in defence, and the whole mass would crumble as does a field of ice, in its pitch over a dam.

And the width and length of it! — on top, under the arches and at each end: So wide that one must look over the parapet to be convinced that it is not one of London's streets; so high, that everything about it is dwarfed; so long, that the farther end is lost in a gray film.

Evins, to whom every foot of it was as well known as the "down grade" to Paddington station, or the "turn in" at Charing Cross, learning that I wanted to see it "broadside on," whirled the cab to the left — we had just come over from the "George Inn" — twisted down a breakneck lane, around some warehouses, and so out upon a sort of landing a few feet above the water line, bristling with heavy iron cranes. Here were square wooden floats bearing idle row-boats — huge affairs which would hold a ship's entire crew — had held them no doubt.

"There ye are, sir, and ye can see the Tower Bridge further up, and if it wasn't for Ben Tillett and a lot of other fools who do be wanting to cut their noses off to spite their ugly mugs, you'd have the river covered with lighters and

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tows, which it ain't been these four weeks, owing to the dock strike which is still on."

But there were boats aplenty; even the vociferous labour leader could not quite empty the rolling Thames, or spoil the scene for me. A lively, impudent tug was puffing flares of white steam into the face of the gray monster, and away up the lane of glistening silver my eyes rested on tiny croton bugs which must have been isolated scows, either adrift or anchored, while up against the sky was a little embroidered edging which proved to be the huge stone rail or parapet guarding the footway. Behind this, moved little dots of heads and flat crawly things which turned out to be vans and omnibuses, with smaller dots fringing their tops. Over all shone one of those luminous ground-glass skies that one sometimes sees in London when the night's rain and wind have swept away the smoke, and things stand out and are *real*.

And with the crisp joyousness of everything about me came a note of sadness. I had lived with My Master for weeks, thought only of him, and at times had almost felt the warmth of his hand in mine. Now the end had come. This was my last sketch. On the morrow I must say good-bye both to him and to his haunts. Yes, it was all over—the work finished and the charcoal box closed. It would be colour now along the lagoons of my beloved Venice.

And I had another farewell to say, for this was also my last day with Evins.

"Paris to-morrow," I said to him, in reluctant tones, as I laid down my charcoal.

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"Yes, sir, so the porter at Jules's told me. I'll be around, sir, early, and take ye to Victoria station."

"I hate to go, Evins — now that we have got to know each other," I added.

"And I hate to have ye, sir. Been a great month — nothing to do but sit still and see ye bang away. Easiest job I ever struck. Ye must be getting hungry, sir; shall I go for a bottle and a sandwich?"

"No, Evins, I'd rather have a table somewhere. Where will it be? The Cock, Cheshire Cheese, or around here?"

"Better make it The Cock, sir. Nothing 'round here but tripe and pigs' feet, and but little of them."

"Make it The Cock, then, Evins."

And so it was.

THE END

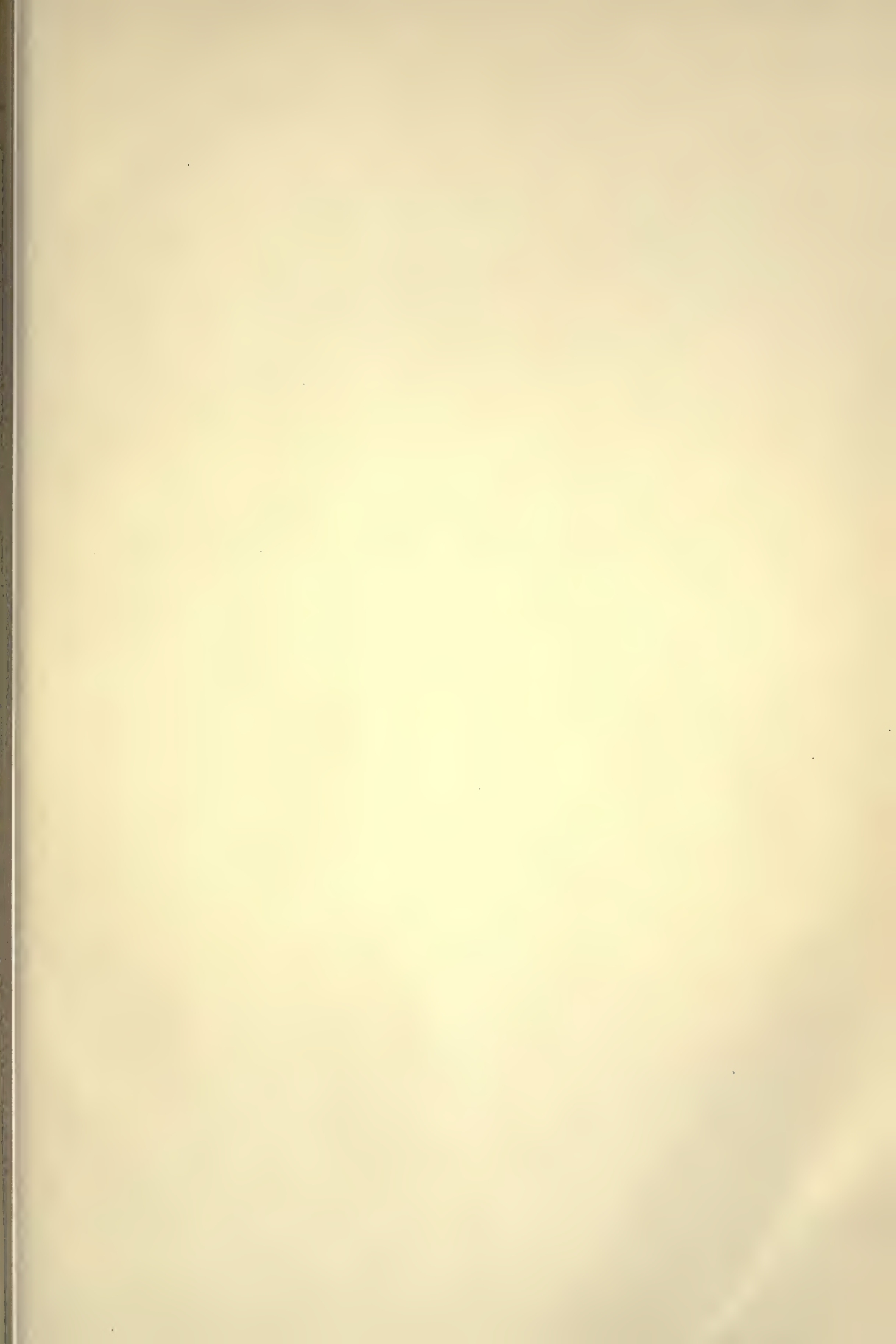


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